

Brother Bonsack

H. SPENSER MINNICH

GEN

Donald Mummert

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



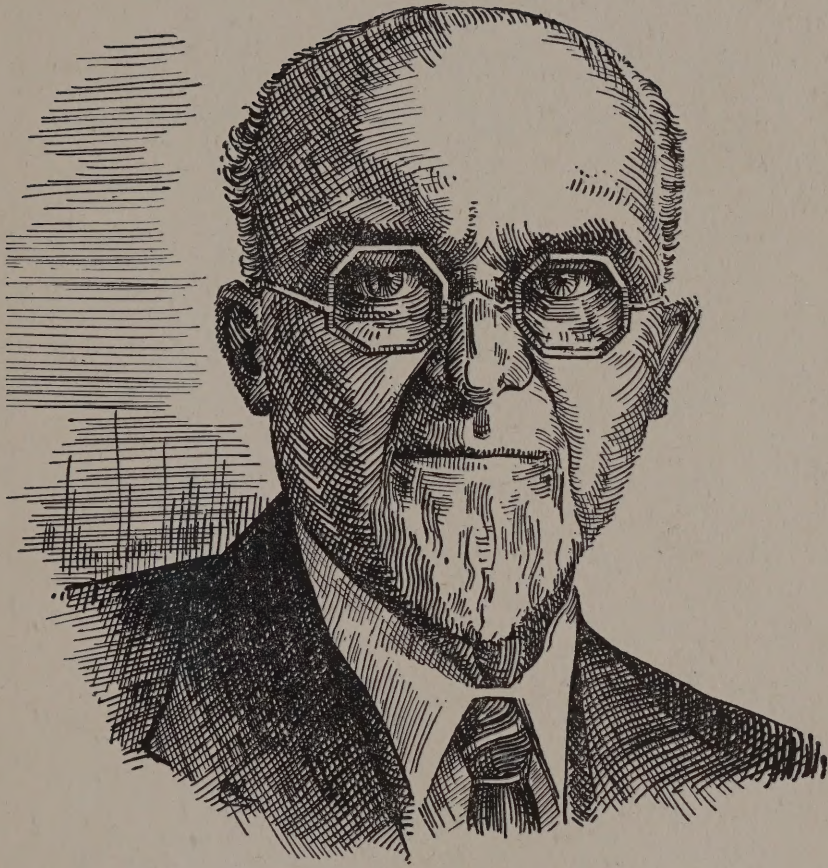
3 1833 01758 8697

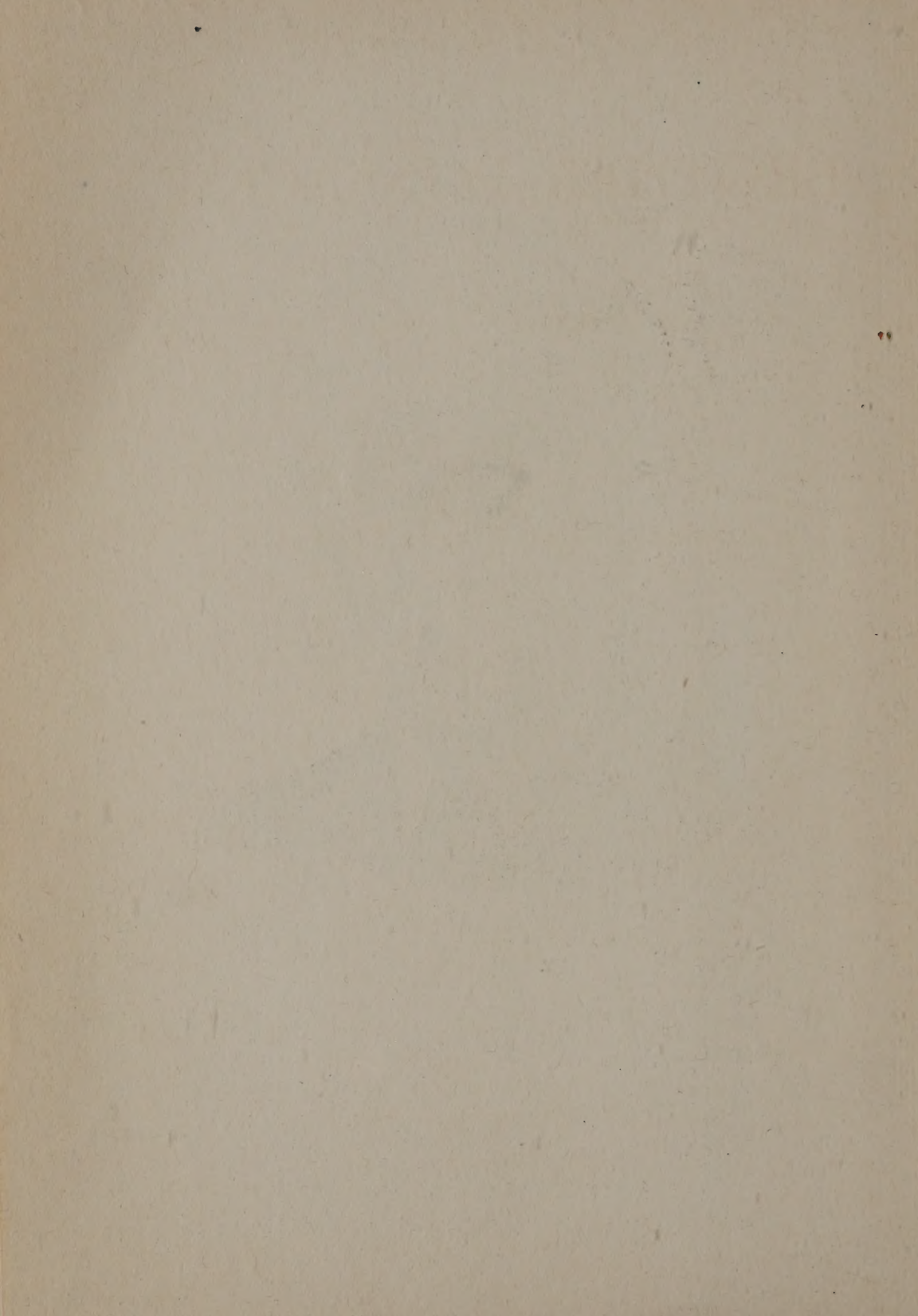
GC

929.102

C473MS

Brother Bonsack





BROTHER BONSACK

by H. Spenser Minnich

Illustrations by Daulat Daniel Chauhan

BRETHREN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Elgin, Illinois

Copyright 1954 by the
HOUSE OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Preface	7
Heritage and Early Years	11
His Wife and Family	18
Emerging As a Churchman	27
Mission Secretary	33
World Traveler	49
General Service to the Church	68
Philosophy and Humor	81
Sixty Years a Minister	89
The Commoner: Man of Strength	94
Excerpts From Memorial Addresses	111
Explanatory Guide to the Drawings	119

Preface

When Brother Bonsack left us, February 5, 1953, on that journey to his spirit home, I was not at Elgin to see him off. I had often bidden him good-by and in jest counseled him not to take wooden nickels as he journeyed to near-by churches or to foreign lands. This final journey to a land he had hitherto left unexplored must not have been difficult or long. Immortality surely is not far distant nor the climate strange for one who has understood and practiced immortal principles of life. Immortality is not something tacked on at the end of an earthly journey. It is a quality which found a happy welcome in Brother Bonsack's mind and soul while he lived in the body. Since his mortal body had so well housed his immortal soul, the transition must have been easy to make. Death troubles only carnal people. It did not trouble Brother Bonsack.

One day as I was discussing with W. Harold Row an appropriate title for this book he said that it must have *Brother* in it. In and out of the Church of the Brethren Charles D. Bonsack was simply Brother Bonsack. He held many evangelistic meetings and was the guest speaker at hundreds of homecomings, harvest meetings, and missionary occasions, and, Brother Row said, it was always good news when the announcement, "Brother Bonsack is coming," was made. The Brotherhood had no one who was more representative of the church, who was more widely known or more universally loved, or who was a better exponent of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The spirit of such a person as Brother Bonsack is needed in any age. He possessed something that we dare not lose. His deep convictions, softened by broad tolerance, his love for his brother man, and his way of relating the Christian religion to all of life need to be remembered. Yes, he is gone; he will not be holding more missionary meetings but his spirit should keep coming and coming to us. The qualities which made Charles Bonsack a loved and useful servant of God justify us in keeping him coming to us and to the lives of our posterity.

There is urgency in the repeated comings of the spirit of one such as Brother Bonsack from his to our own and future generations. Life, to him, came like a great stream pouring the past into the future. He was skilled in subtracting from the past much of the unfit, in preserving the vital, and in adding to it much that was lacking. Although he was not a historian he was able to examine the past and discern the unfolding of the living processes. The breath-taking changes from decade to decade during his life were frustrating to many people. He contributed personal, social, and religious stability. Disturbed persons and groups would ask him to come and share his thinking with them. Catastrophic changes continue in our day, and we need Brother Bonsack to help us to know how to think.

Accordingly, after much reflection and counseling with others, a title was decided upon—one that would appropriately sum up his character, his relationships to his Christian brethren both inside and outside the Church of the Brethren, and the high esteem in which he was widely held, one that would recall the often- and happily-repeated

sentence, "Brother Bonsack is coming." The title would be simply *Brother Bonsack*.

Brother Bonsack having been a man of the people, many of those whom he had known and loved and who in turn loved him would like a hand in writing this book. Wishing to let them help, I propose to quote freely from their words and to try to reflect their feelings. When Elder Jesse Klein, contemporary of Charles D. Bonsack, learned of the writing project, he said, "Brother Bonsack, a nobleman! For one man to write regarding Charles D. Bonsack is a momentous task; if a thousand contribute it may be some help!"

My thanks are extended to all—named and unnamed—who have assisted in any way in the preparation of this biographical sketch. Special recognition is gratefully given to the members of Brother Bonsack's family, and particularly to Mrs. Edith Barnes, for information on and insights into his life.

Daulat Daniel Chauhan, Bombay, India, is the artist having made for this book pen sketches from photographs. He is a Christian, coming from the Church of the Brethren mission at Bulsar. His father, Daniel, was for twenty-one years a schoolteacher. Brother Chauhan was eleven when his father died. His mother, Rahelbai, was a teacher for twenty-nine years and is now an evangelist at Bulsar. Daulat liked and studied art and now has his A.M. (Art Master) degree. He also has his diploma in Fine Art (painting). He has been teaching art and aspires to further study. "After finishing my study," he says, "the field will be open to me to serve my Lord

and also our depressed brethren." When I asked concerning his charge for the work on this book, he modestly replied, "Brother Bonsack sacrificed his life not to be valued but to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to guide the people who knew not the Lord."

I hope you will be helped in your Christian life by this story of a truly great soul. Perhaps what God did for and through Brother Bonsack will inspire you to be a more useful instrument in His hands.

—*H. Spenser Minnich*
Elgin, Illinois
January, 1954



Heritage and Early Years

When a great one is among us we wonder how he is given or attains such stature. In *The Shepherd of the Hills* Harold Bell Wright asks and answers the question thus: "What is it that makes him so different from other folks? It is the thoughts he thinks all to himself."

The first name in the records of the Bonsack family in America was that of John Jacob Bonsack, great-grandfather of Charles. He came to America from Stuttgart, Germany, and previous to that time had gone from France to Germany because he refused to obey the injunction to "fight for the people." He chose rather to flee the country.

Six months after arriving in America he married Marya Hockman, whose father had come from Stuttgart. John Hockman was a professor of ability and also a weaver.

The religious fervor characterizing the family relationships is revealed in a letter which John Jacob's father, John George Bonsack, in Germany wrote to his twenty-six-year-old son after he had arrived in America. The greeting in the letter is not unlike one in the Apostle Paul's letters. "We have truly rejoiced to hear of your bodily health. But much more, to hear of your spiritual health, we are thankful to God. . . . I was ever in hopes that I could see you again with my bodily eyes—that our spiritual rejoicing might be strengthened. John writes, chapter 4, verse 12, 'If we love one another and his love is perfected in us.' Not many hours pass by that we do not remember you in love. Yes, we have this command from our Savior, 'He that loveth him also loveth his brother.' My days are soon spent. I am fully white, seventy years old. Our hearty salutation to you. All the family greet you."

A reading of letters from parents to children and from brothers to sisters in the generations of the Bonsack family impresses one with their awareness of the basic religious concepts and precepts. Many of the letters carried salutations like these: "The grace of our beloved Lord and Savior be with you in time and eternity; . . . in the name of the Lord and for his glory; . . . may the love of God be pleased to strengthen our faith." Assembling for worship was important in their lives, so important that the large stone house in which Nathaniel Bonsack, grandfather of Charles, lived was hung with folding doors so that

several rooms could be opened together for a large gathering of people.

David Bonsack, father of Charles, was one of the early elders of the Meadow Branch church (two miles from Westminster, Maryland). A successful farmer, much interested in the people and the affairs of the community, he was sometimes invited to the courthouse to give judgment on certain matters and was frequently consulted by bank officials. He took much interest in the public schools and secured the co-operation of others in improving them. He was the president of the Westminster and Meadow Branch Turnpike Company, which built a road extending along the church, the school, the mill, and the blacksmith shop. Of strong physique, tall and stalwart, he was a generous man, friendly and kind to the less fortunate.

Charles' mother was of the Roop family lineage. Her grandfather, John Roop, settled in the Meadow Branch vicinity about the year 1795 after emigrating from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and built a mill there. The Roops and the Royers gave the land for the Meadow Branch church and cemetery and fostered the growth of the Church of the Brethren in that community. Catharine Roop had first married Amos Royer and was a widow when she married David Bonsack. She was a saintly mother, calm of attitude, patient in tribulation, deliberate and effective in her movements. Her life was a benediction wherever she went.

Charles Daniel Bonsack was born on March 11, 1870, to David Dorsey and Catharine Roop Bonsack on a fertile,

rolling farm less than a mile west of Westminster, Maryland. On this farm he grew to manhood.

He went to the Meadow Branch public school, a red brick schoolhouse with an open belfry, located a full two miles distant from the farm. The teacher in this school about whom he talked most in later years was Mr. McSweeny. This man was a liberal-minded Roman Catholic. He did not believe in the totalitarianism of the pope, and his religious philosophy made room in heaven for all who live to the best of their knowledge and ability. From this rugged, persevering, friendly schoolmaster the pupils learned the basic lessons of life. He read from the Bible each day and had a way of making what he read seem important. He led the pupils in singing the hymns and the folksongs which are the heritage of all and brought to hungry minds treasures from the poets and the statesmen of history. He transmitted to youth a reverence for life and a hunger for learning the truth.

Charles' desire to learn was deep seated. He used small opportunities for big purposes which were becoming fixed. He liked the spelling bees held on Friday afternoons in the schoolhouse and often succeeded in staying on his feet longer than anyone else in the room. According to his teacher, William E. Roop, Charles and Mary Reese knew all the answers to the teacher's questions. Charles continued at the public school until he was sixteen. At that time there was no high school in Carroll County, and the educational officials added extra curriculum beyond the usual eight grades.

Brother Bonsack continued a self-education experi-

ence to the end of his life. Throughout his lifetime he was a wide reader. During the busy days on the farm he would take time in the early morning to read the Bible with the family and then get the news of the world from the daily paper before he joined the men at their work at the barn and in the fields. He was alert to educational opportunities and for more than twenty years attended the special two-week Bible study courses offered each winter by Bridgewater College, Bridgewater, Virginia, and Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. Some of his teachers in these sessions were S. N. McCann, W. B. Yount, Henry C. Early, J. S. Flory, Amos Haines, and the Brumbaughs, M. G., H. B., and J. B.

Charles was about fifteen years old when the Meadow Branch congregation was organized separately from the Pipe Creek congregation. At the age of eighteen he was baptized. Not until he was ten years old was there a Sunday school organized in the church, and when the first one was started in 1880 his father was one of the organizers.

Whether there should be a Sunday school was long a debated issue, and the starting of one needed authorization by the church council. Those who still held back on giving approval to a Sunday school would sometimes sit on the churchyard fence on Sunday morning, eyeing those who entered the church doors as proudly following worldly practices when they went to Sunday school. Previous to this time, in Westminster, the Lewis Woodwards, the John Englars, and the Miles Warners in turn invited boys and girls into their homes for a Sunday-school hour. Eventually, when the homes could not accommodate the

growing numbers who came, the request was made of the Meadow Branch church for permission to start a Sunday school in the Westminster church, which had become a part of the congregation. Permission was granted. And when the church people observed the values in the Sunday school they became sympathetic toward organizing one in the Meadow Branch church.

The Civil War cannon had been stilled five years before Brother Bonsack's birth. Maryland, a border state, had stood to preserve the Union even though there were many slaves in the state. Tension on the slavery question had been high. Some people had owned slaves; others had bitterly opposed slavery. To oppose slavery in a slave community brought criticism and slander. The Brethren remained united in opposing it, thus preserving the unity of their group while many denominations split over the issue. Individual members, however, held slaves, a circumstance which caused some difficulty. Moreover, the Brethren were forbidden by the tenets of their faith to go to war. The refusal to take up arms brought persecution.

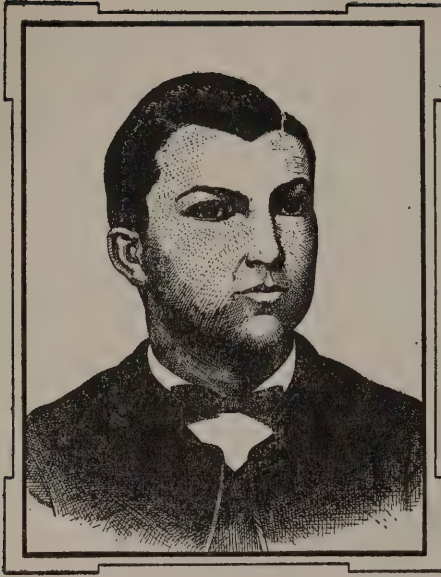
Perusing the index of *Minutes of the Annual Meetings, 1778 to 1909*, we learn what were the concerns of the church during Brother Bonsack's early years: rules governing Annual Meeting, the work of adjoining elders, anointing, baptism, adultery, bearing arms, employing attorneys, compelling people by law, ardent spirits, card playing, labor unions, plain dressing, family worship, fairs and festivals, usury, secret societies, life insurance, the use of tobacco, voting at public elections, holding public office, missions, gospel tracts, tithing. The Brethren felt them-

selves a separated people, even to the details of their daily lives, as many of these items would suggest. It was the conviction of the Brethren that the gospel was something to be practiced rather than a creed to be recited.

During Brother Bonsack's youth the church was inclined to avoid close relationships to politics, clubs, and even other churches. Many Conference decisions expressed the position that relationships within the church would be sufficient and that relationships with other bodies were unnecessary. There was to be avoidance of all worldly pleasures as if they were of the evil one. Brother Bonsack liked to tell a story which illustrates this latter point. A certain brother was offered ice cream for the first time. He put a bit of it on his tongue, gave a little time to appraise the taste and then, putting the spoon down, said, "Anything as good as this must be of the devil."

When, in 1876, the Church of the Brethren sent its first missionaries to foreign soil—Denmark and Sweden—Brother Bonsack was six years old. He was twenty-four when, in 1894, Wilbur and Mary Stover and Bertha Ryan went to India as our first missionaries to the Orient. As he learned of the movements in the church and the wider world, his horizons expanded and he turned over in his mind the meaning and significance of these movements.

His close observation of and his participation in the life of the church of his youth, which he viewed both critically and sympathetically, had a profound bearing upon his later life and did much to make him the outstanding churchman which he became.



His Wife and Family

There was a capable and faithful wife supporting Charles Bonsack in his endeavors. Ida A. Trostle, the oldest of four daughters of John and Elizabeth Pfoutz Trostle, of near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Charles were married on December 16, 1891. Henry C. Early, with whom Charles was to work in the missionary program of the church in later years, was the officiating minister. The wedding took place in the William Geiman home, adjoining the Bonsack farm. Ida had lived in this home for three years previous to her marriage, having come to assist with the tasks of a growing family. In these three years she had earned her way in the social life of the community and the church. When the time for her wedding came the

Geimans opened their home for attendance of many friends and relatives who wished to extend their good wishes to the young couple.

Ida was prepared to assume her place as mistress of a farm home. She had grown up on a farm, and, having no brothers, was accustomed to extending her physical energies beyond the house, even to the barn and the hay-field. She was familiar with the necessity of starting a day's work at four o'clock in the morning, and, in the winter season, going with a lantern to the barn to milk the cows. Her diary records make reference to occasions of rising even earlier than the accustomed hour to bake a dozen loaves of bread and almost that many pies. When there was an all-day council meeting at the church or it was love feast time, the number of pies taken to the church in the spring wagon was something to startle the imagination of a present-day bride who can in no time at all whip up a pie from ready-mixed ingredients.

There are diary records of activities beyond the environs of the farm. There was no deviation from the Sunday morning practice of driving a mile on the Meadow Branch turnpike to the church house. On Sunday night Ida used to accompany her husband to his appointment to preach at a mission church—Union Mills or Begg's Chapel, perhaps. On a weekday night they sang with other young people in a home of the community. They wanted to learn more about the rudiments of music and become more familiar with the hymns in the Brethren hymnal. Ida welcomed this opportunity because she was sometimes called upon to lead the hymns in the Sunday morning church

service, and she was the teacher of the children's group in the Sunday school. Both of them could always be counted on for assistance in the community when sickness befell a member of some family. They drove to other church congregations at love feast occasions. And at least annually, they made the trip to the Trostle home near Gettysburg.

When Charles was twenty-two years old he took over the farm after the death of his father. He brought it to a high state of productivity and put it on a sound financial basis. As he spent more and more time in church-centered activities, it was necessary to entrust responsibility and delegate tasks to the men who worked with him on the farm. In his absence, Mrs. Bonsack naturally had to assume deeper concerns about the ongoing daily work and the attendant responsibilities of the farm. Usually there was another woman in the house to help her with the work—a relative or a neighbor. The older children can remember their mother's telling how she used to push the baby carriage with one hand—there was a crying baby in it—and prepare breakfast with the other. This is typical of the multitudinous duties that at times confronted her and the two-fold readiness with which she approached the tasks at hand.

The five children, Blanche, Edith, Ralph, Paul, and Olga, were born in the same house in which their father was born. It was an old house at the time of Charles's birth. Long ago someone had hewn the stones from the land for the walls of the house. Similar stones were used to wall in the garden and the barnyard. These walls were wide enough and solid enough to furnish a runway for the

boys and girls when they could get away from their chores. There was a huge bake oven of stone construction at the back of the house. In the days before Ida lived in the house large quantities of loaves of bread were baked in the oven for daily provision of the family. The children used to hear the story that during the days of the Civil War hungry soldiers would come across the fields of the farm to wait near the house for the brown, warm loaves as Grandma Bonsack took them from the wide-mouthed oven door.

The children understood clearly what their mother's wishes were in regard to the family duties. There were tasks for each one and they were distributed in areas—at the chicken house, in the dairy, in the woodshed, in the garden, and in the house. If anyone came to the supper table delinquent in completed tasks the fact usually became known. In such a case, each one learned a new lesson in self-discipline, without many words being spoken. An offender might have emotional disturbance before he closed his eyes in sleep if he remembered that he had failed in his behavior during the day. If anyone had done wrong he was made to feel a sense of regret. A prayer of forgiveness restored him again in renewed understanding of God's love and care and in family favor. Mother Bonsack gathered the children about her at the bedtime hour for prayers and stories. Her vivid narration of a story from the Bible stirred the imaginations of the children. They could go to bed with a feeling of satisfaction that all was well albeit their father might be geographically separated from the circle.

At the Bonsack house, the doors were never locked. Family life was enriched by the fellowship of those who came and went. Sometimes the ministers came to talk with Brother Bonsack about the administration of the church and its program and problems. Some of these preachers lived in the local church, some in adjoining congregations. At love feast time visiting elders and others driving from a distance found rest and comfort in the three guest rooms in the house, the children perchance sleeping on the floor. On these special occasions the dining table was so long that there were "two of everything" on the table. On any ordinary Sunday, it was customary to invite members of the congregation home for dinner, much to the delight of the children, even though they sometimes had to wait their turn to get a place at the "second table." In those days there were more fellowship meals in the home than in the church.

Relatives were always welcome and often came without invitation. Aunt Sarah and Uncle Lehman and Cousin Emma did not wait to be invited to visit. It was expected that they would come when they could and stay as long as was convenient. If relatives and friends from near by came in to talk they would often stay for dinner, or supper, as the case might be. They did not expect a company menu and enjoyed the ham and fried potatoes, if these were on the table that day. Frequently there were "tramps" who accepted the shelter of the barn for the night and in the morning came to the house for breakfast. For a number of years Negro Jim, a one-time slave, was in the family circle around the table at mealtime. He assisted with tasks

around the home and was often the family baby sitter when the parents were away.

When the Bonsack home was in Washington, D. C., many visitors stopped there, some to say hello and others to stay overnight or for a number of nights. On more than one occasion, Brother Bonsack was called to answer the request of a young couple who had come to the capital city to be married and enjoy a honeymoon there. The pastor's house was a natural stopping place for Brethren people visiting in Washington.

Again, when residence was near the college campus, students and faculty members were welcomed in the home. Mrs. Bonsack found pleasure in sharing plans for preparation of food for students when they had the good fortune to receive boxes from home. Her pumpkin pies were the kind that one of the professors said he wished he could eat his way out of.

When they lived in the college buildings at New Windsor, and later in their new home just off the campus, Mrs. Bonsack found opportunity to be a friend to the students. Some of them brought their personal problems to her and looked for sympathy and help. She was usually available if she were wanted by a young woman on the campus who desired the benefit of more mature experience. She took under her care at various times three or four younger boys who for one reason or another had been denied a mother's love and care. She personally looked after some of their routine needs in the dormitory. For a while she had two boys rooming in their home.

While the family lived in Old Main at the college,

Mrs. Bonsack was closely allied with the management of the college kitchen. Her domestic skills in planning and preparing for a large number of boarders were useful in this situation. She took delight in pleasing the students with a delectable dessert now and then when the budget would allow it. She knew how to keep happy relations with Annie the cook, and her husband George, who was the handyman on the campus. One summer while a dormitory building program was in progress she saw to it that the family and several students put their full physical energies into the ongoing project. The boys laid bricks and the girls tended the gardens and cooked the meals on the big stoves in the college kitchen. In those days the family was eating in the college dining hall.

The children enjoyed the educational opportunities of the day. When they started to school they walked the same two miles on the Meadow Branch road that their father had walked, and cultivated their hunger for learning in the same red brick schoolhouse which he had attended. Since those two miles were a long way for one little girl to walk to school alone the parents decided that Blanche would not start to school until Edith was old enough to go with her. So the two started, continued, and finished their schooling in the same class.

The opportunity for educating the children in a favorable environment was a determining factor in the parents' decision to go to Union Bridge, Maryland, in the year 1910 after they had lived for three years in Washington, D. C. They considered the quiet country town a more desirable environment for growing children than the

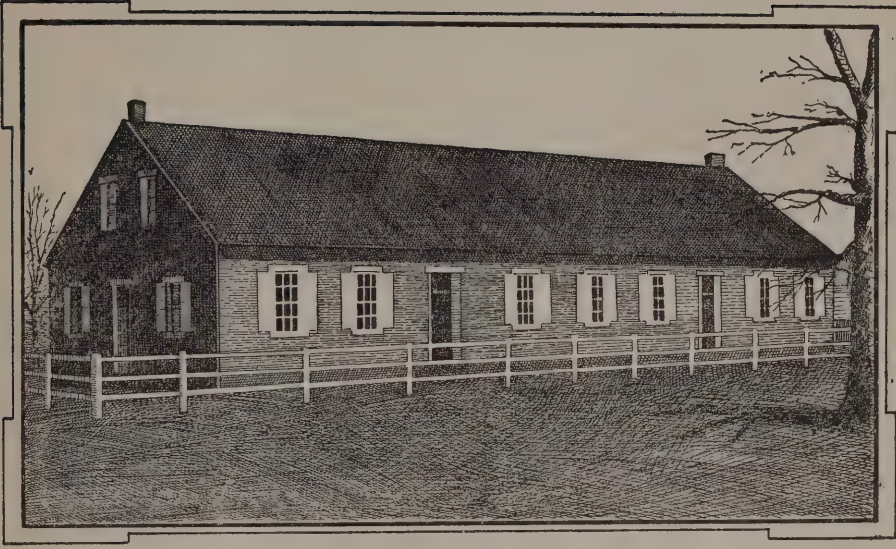
capital city was. Moreover, to reside near the campus of a Brethren college held promise for choice educational and social opportunities. Brother Bonsack had been pastor of the Washington church for three years when the older children were ready for high school. He then turned his attention to the advantages of living near Blue Ridge College. The five children, therefore, attended this college, first at Union Bridge and later at New Windsor, Maryland. The family moved with the college, as it were. The college was compelled to leave the Union Bridge vicinity because of the very undesirable cement-dust nuisance which followed the location of the Portland Tidewater Cement Company near the town. The Bonsacks moved to the new college location at New Windsor, and all the children completed the liberal arts course there.

In Elgin, in later years, the demands on Mrs. Bonsack's physical energies lessened. It was a less strenuous life that she lived here as over against the days on the farm, in the capital, and in the small college town. Her services outside the home were limited now almost entirely to the church. She was one of the very faithful ones at the church every Thursday when the ladies sat around the quilts to ply their needles in tiny, regular stitches. There they had fellowship with one another as they made the designs come slowly into being with their careful work. She and Mrs. Edward Frantz went early to the church and stayed late on "aid" days. They were two of the last to witness the transition of women's work as an activity of the hands to the enlarged development of study and program activities.

Three trips abroad during the thirty years of

residence in Elgin took Brother Bonsack away from home for longer periods of time than Mrs. Bonsack had yet experienced. She was with him in purpose and followed him from place to place with her prayers as he made these journeys. It was a time of rejoicing when he returned from a tour of the mission fields. Then, after retirement from official relationships with the General Mission Board, Brother Bonsack continued to be absent from home on briefer and less extended trips. Many of these journeys were to local churches, and all of them were within the States. But he was away from home much of the time. Even at the time of Mrs. Bonsack's last illness he was called in Pennsylvania to come home to Elgin. While he was on business for the Kingdom in distant places, Mrs. Bonsack was building the Kingdom in the home and in the neighborhood.

The children cherish the memories of their home and parents. They are deeply grateful for the heritage which gave them purpose in life, faith in a loving God, and a widening outlook on the world's peoples and their needs. The basic ideas and ideals that were transmitted to the next generation through daily living in the home are not to be estimated in quantity. An analytical process can hardly calculate all the factors that set a life in the direction it moves. Certainly the learning that goes on in the world outside the home adds to the sum of influences for good or ill in a life. But so far, there has been found no substitute for a family-centered social unit in a Brethren home such as Charles and Ida Bonsack endowed for coming generations.



Emerging As a Churchman

In 1891 the Meadow Branch church needed another minister. Most Brethren congregations at that time were served by several ministers chosen from the local membership by election in a church council. The day for the council to elect the needed minister came while Charles and Ida were on their wedding trip. When the council convened, William Franklin, a home minister, and an elder from the neighboring Pipe Creek congregation, likely Ephraim Stoner, prepared to take the vote.

After a period of prayer for Spirit guidance, the two elders stationed themselves in the rear room of the rectangular, flat ceilinged, stone meetinghouse. One member at a time was ushered in and asked, "For whom do you cast your vote?" Without any previous discussion as to

suitable candidates (that would have been unethical and might have hindered the work of the Holy Spirit), each gave the name of his choice. When the count was made there was a majority of votes for young Bonsack.

There was no telephone service in 1891 over which the newlyweds, still away on their wedding trip, could be notified. Little did the young couple, happy in their new blissful state, dream of the news to greet them upon their return. It was a great surprise, even a shock. A sense of unworthiness came over them. These emotions were good signs to the congregation that the Spirit had really directed the casting of the votes. Had it been known that Charles was offering himself for the ministry, that would have been evidence of his unfitness. But Charles and Ida were so well qualified spiritually and by native endowment that after what seemed an appropriate time of silence they accepted the call and entered eagerly and actively into the work assigned.

Charles, in keeping with the system in the church, had been elected to the first degree of the ministry. Privileges in the first degree were limited to exhortation, preaching, opening and closing services, and serving as an assistant to the elder and the older ministers. When he accepted the call of the church a Sunday installation service was arranged for him and his bride early in 1892. They came before the congregation and promised to observe the general order of the Brotherhood in dress and in all matters of nonconformity to the world. Charles agreed to grow the beard expected of ministers. Then the brethren passed by and in turn greeted him with the right hand of fellowship

and the kiss of charity and the sisters with the right hand of fellowship. Ida, standing beside him, likewise received an appropriate greeting from each member.

Charles was soon advanced to the second degree, which authorized him to baptize, serve communion, solemnize the rite of marriage, and perform all duties of the ministry except to install officers in the church or to have presiding oversight of the church in its council meetings.

Not until 1906, at age thirty-six, thirteen years after his election, was Charles advanced to the full eldership. He was one of the youngest elders in Maryland. From the time he was advanced to the eldership his influence increased rapidly and soon extended beyond the local church. He had already been holding evangelistic meetings and was known throughout and beyond Maryland.

His interest and activities were not confined to those usually associated with the ministry. Everything that concerned the welfare and work of the church concerned him. From J. M. Henry's *History of the Church of the Brethren in Maryland* we note Brother Bonsack's part in the Sunday-school movement:

The Sunday schools in Eastern Maryland grew rapidly after 1900. In 1907, J. Welty Fahrney reported 28 Sunday schools with a total attendance of 2,882. The report in 1912 showed Meadow Branch leading all the churches of the district. This was due to the untiring efforts of Charles D. Bonsack, who had helped open four new schools.

In the 1906 Annual Conference, held at Springfield, Illinois, Charles was elected a member of the General Missionary and Tract Committee of what was then the German Baptist Brethren Church. He attended his first

meeting of the committee on June 7 at Springfield in a post-Conference session. The committee next met at Elgin, Illinois, on December 19. D. L. Miller was chairman and Galen B. Royer was secretary. The items of business included translation and publishing of doctrinal tracts in India; J. M. Blough, W. B. Stover, and Eliza B. Miller were assigned this task with three hundred dollars per year allowed for the work. Mission work and orphanage work in Denmark, Sweden, France, and Switzerland were considered. In the minutes of that meeting there are two references to work for colored people in America. This meeting was the beginning of thirty-seven years of official service which Brother Bonsack gave to the mission work of the church.

The year 1906 was eventful for Charles in yet another way. He was called to the nation's capital to serve as pastor. It was his first pastorate. The church was really a seventy-five-member mission. The local members agreed to pay him two hundred dollars per year in addition to the one thousand dollars paid by the Eastern Maryland district mission board. Mrs. Mary M. Hinshaw, a long-time member of the Washington, D. C., church, says: "The members yet living who were in Washington during the years 1906-09 say that Brother and Sister Bonsack were beloved by all. They were like mother and father to the young people who came from the rural areas to the District of Columbia to secure employment. Factions existed prior to their coming. There were constant differences of opinion pertaining to nonconformity, mode of dress, wearing of jewelry, and membership in labor unions and lodges.

Because of Brother Bonsack's ability to meet these situations in a Christlike way and because of his untiring spirit and interest in the church, the work prospered." The church became evangelistic, the missionary idea was developed, endeavor was put forth to bring the mission to a self-supporting basis, and by 1909 the membership had increased to one hundred sixty-eight.

The trustees of Blue Ridge College, then located at Union Bridge, Maryland, called him to help them in a difficult situation, which call he accepted in 1909. The Washington church appointed a committee of three to dissuade Union Bridge from taking their pastor, but to no avail.

At the college his duties seemed many, ranging from those of pastor, Bible teacher, business manager, and vice-president to those of chairman of the board of trustees. In 1913 he was elected acting president. In this capacity he served two years before Paul H. Bowman succeeded him as president of the college, which, in 1912, had been moved to New Windsor, Maryland, and renamed Blue Ridge College.

Brother Bonsack's relationships with Blue Ridge College show him a man who had received public acceptance as a reliable, dependable representative of the Brethren constituency. He was not trained as an executive in college work, he was not a well-seasoned solicitor of funds, and the general administration of an institution was hardly his line. Yet when the school needed someone to bridge a gap and to meet an emergency, Charles D. Bonsack was the man to press into service.

He did considerable soliciting of funds for the college. On one occasion an elder was taking him to see the members of his congregation. Before Brother Bonsack expected it the elder announced the completion of their work. Brother Bonsack asked, "Have we seen all the members?" "No, but we have seen all who give," replied the elder. Brother Bonsack, with faith in others and faith in himself to present the cause, proposed seeing the nongiving members. I well remember his enjoyment in telling how the response of the latter group exceeded in amount what the first group gave. He used this to illustrate our faintheartedness and lack of patience in working personally with people of timid or slow response.

The responsibilities entrusted to Brother Bonsack as an emerging churchman, having been handled in a competent and acceptable manner, gave promise of still greater achievements in the years to come, a promise that was richly fulfilled in the next four decades. Succeeding chapters of this sketch will point up the flowering of that churchmanship of which the earlier years of his life had given hopeful evidence.



Mission Secretary

In Howard Thurman's *Deep Is the Hunger* he says that it may seem to be splitting hairs to say that destiny is what a man does with his fate and that fate is given whereas destiny is won.

Charles D. Bonsack so well cultivated and shaped the rich raw materials of life given to him that in 1909 he was considered worthy and capable of becoming the traveling secretary of the General Mission Board of the Church of the Brethren (the Missionary and Tract Committee until 1908) of which he had first been elected a member in 1906. He was not wholly without the executive experience needed by a secretary, for when he was elected a member of the committee and worked with

its other members—H. C. Early, S. F. Sanger, A. B. Barnhart, John Zuck, and D. L. Miller—he was assigned the foremanship of a building committee to work with the mission church in Brooklyn, New York. There is, however, no record of his ever having served in the position of traveling secretary.

When D. L. Miller resigned as chairman of the board in 1914, H. C. Early became chairman and Charles D. Bonsack vice-chairman. This position he held until his board term expired in 1916. He was eligible for re-election, but at that time someone in the Standing Committee made some disparaging remarks about him and he was not re-elected. Some churchmen, knowing that a wrong interpretation had been given concerning Brother Bonsack, again proposed his name in 1917, and he was elected for a five-year term.

At the 1917 Conference the General Sunday School Board report proposed a plan for a Forward Movement in Sunday-school attendance, conversions, missions, and Bible study. The mission board report announced that the five-year Forward Movement to have been inaugurated in 1918 would begin January 1, 1919. At the request of the Bridgewater, Virginia, congregation in 1919, Conference heartily endorsed the Forward Movement and authorized the boards to carry it out. The boards, in September of that year, decided that a full-time director of the Forward Movement should be secured. In that year there was a stirring along several lines. Missionary interest was growing in the churches, a new home mission vision was being seen, higher goals in giving were being

reached, and Student Volunteer groups were flourishing in our colleges.

The choice for the director of the Forward Movement fell on Charles D. Bonsack. He very reluctantly accepted, and then only on a somewhat tentative basis. Leaving his family at home, he took up residence, alone, at Elgin, Illinois, and started his work.

In 1918 the veteran mission secretary-treasurer, Galen B. Royer, was succeeded by the genial and promising Kansan, J. H. B. Williams, whom the board sent in 1920 to visit its mission fields. On July 8, 1920, Brother Bonsack at Elgin, feeling a bit discouraged and lonesome without his family, wrote Williams a farewell letter, addressing it to Newville, North Dakota, so that Williams would receive it en route to his West Coast sailing port. In the letter he expressed thoughts of resigning his Forward Movement job.

Two paragraphs from Williams' reply give a glimpse of the new board secretary, whom Brother Bonsack as a board member had helped to employ and whom he was to succeed:

"I have been thinking today that I would like to write you a few lines on the Forward Movement and I trust that you will bear with my foolishness in so doing. I have felt so sorry in the last month that I have been too busy getting ready for this final kickoff to think as much of the Movement as I ought. Really, I would have far sooner remained with you there than to have tackled this task. And it was from no lack of interest that I have said so little about the work. The attitude of some folks

at conference showed to me a wonderful need for something like the Forward Movement.

"We have been thinking on formal things so long, and have been allowing ourselves to be vexed with the little things of church life to such an extent that when any Board undertakes to uncover the really big problems of the world that confront us, we like to hide our heads in the sand, or go to sleep out on our broad Dunkard acres and affirm that no problem comes nigh us. The innate selfishness of the human heart and our tendency toward materialism in church work have made your problem as Forward Movement Director difficult, indeed. You are not failing in the task; you simply are the agent through whom is being uncovered much work ahead in uniting the Lord's forces. We sing, 'Like a mighty army moves the Church of God.' We forget that oftentimes we march as if we are the bolshevik wing of that mighty host. Oh well, pardon the vagary. I do not want you to be discouraged. The work must go on. Should you lay it down, another must take it up where you leave off, and who would it be!"

Brother Bonsack did not resign and in August 1921 pulled up stakes as a Marylander to become a citizen of Illinois. He bought a residence on Commonwealth Avenue in Elgin, which remained their home until his death.

When Brother Williams went abroad in 1920 this writer, who was then the missionary education secretary of the board, was left in charge of the mission office. It would have taken much faith on the part of the board

and the secretary to trust the precious affairs of the church to a yet-untested secretary, except for their confidence that Brother Bonsack, who had his Forward Movement office across the hall, would be a good counselor.

The tragic death of Brother Williams of typhoid on April 16, 1921, at Mombasa, Kenya, East Africa, left the board without a secretary. In September 1921 the board elected Charles Bonsack its acting secretary and in September 1922 its general secretary. This position he held until September 1, 1941, when he was succeeded by Leland S. Brubaker and became the board's advisory secretary.

The Conference of 1922 elected Brother Bonsack to another five-year term as a board member. But he felt it unethical that he should be one of the five board members acting on his own employment and resigned as board member at the 1923 Conference.

As the board's secretary he enjoyed the general confidence of the Brotherhood. He was much used as a committeeman, being especially wanted on assignments on which the work of the committee, however good, might fail of public acceptance except for the integrity of the committee members and the church's confidence in them. I remember visiting, back in the thirties, in the home of J. J. Oller, churchman, industrialist, and philanthropist of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. He asked, "Who is the head at Elgin?" I replied that we had no head, but that we had a secretary of the mission board, secretaries of other boards, editors, and a manager for the publishing house. "Well, I couldn't run my business that way, but as long

as Charlie Bonsack is there and serving as one of the secretaries I'll trust it to be all right," he said, and straightway wrote the board a check.

When the Forward Movement was coming into being, the Interchurch World Movement, an interdenominational promotional venture, had captured the interest of our church boards. The movement was projected on a grandiose scale, promising great returns. It was necessary to underwrite its expenses. The failure of the movement to deliver what it promised brought censure from the Brethren people on Brethren boards and their officials. Someone needed to explain and defend at Conference the board's position; such an assignment readily fell to Charles D. Bonsack, along with A. C. Wieand, who also enjoyed the confidence of the church.



Minutes of the board are replete with work assigned to a person or a committee, and Brother Bonsack was a very frequent assignee. Examples: A 1920 committee to keep contact with the Washington, D. C., congregation regarding a proposed church edifice—the committee, Charles D. Bonsack and H. C. Early; a person to take Otho Winger's place on a committee considering objectives and program—Charles D. Bonsack appointed; a speaker at the important Annual Conference missionary convocation—Charles D. Bonsack appointed on numerous occasions; someone with influence to write the Conference Offering appeal in the *Messenger*—"Let's ask Charles D. Bonsack." Thus, from 1906 until nearly his last days, he was fulfilling vital and often exacting assignments by the board. Annual Conference requested much in this field, also, on which we make comment in another chapter.

What made Brother Bonsack an acceptable secretary of the board, charged with a vast amount of vital church work? He was criticized by a number of people. Some would say that he was not a great organizer. He had no extensive academic learning. The routine of an office was not a natural for him. But his points of strength were much greater than his weaknesses, and we have no desire to try to recall his shortcomings. We want his great spirit to keep coming to us as we recall the things we might like to emulate. Some of the basic traits of personality and soul which gave him strength are considered in three later chapters; here we are looking only at those practical traits which made him a strong missionary secretary.

He understood human nature. Lavinia Roop Wenger, commenting on his qualities, said, "He seemed to have a sixth sense. In addition to the sense of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing he had a sense of human value." She described this as a sense of human worth and relation. This skill made him able to understand people.

Once when I was on a speaking tour with him, we had mission pictures to throw on the screen. We came to a church that had not allowed pictures to be shown. Brother Bonsack, in his unique way, told the people at the close of the afternoon service of our plan to present in the evening service some pictures of our mission work. He stated that since we learned that there were objections to pictures we would not want to show them, but he would do his best by word pictures. Only if the church were united in wanting projected pictures would we show them. During the evening supper hour the members counseled together, deciding they wanted the projected pictures. His understanding mind and undemanding attitude had demonstrated a good way to "win friends and influence people."

Brother Bonsack inspired young people to church and missionary service, as is shown by the following comments. Kenneth I. Morse: "It was he who at a Student Volunteer convention lifted up the mission cause for me." W. J. Hamilton: "The way he said things somehow got into the heart of young people and touched the wellsprings of their souls as the message of a great orator never could have done." Dr. and Mrs. Lloyd Studebaker: "He always seemed like a father with his kindly, genial ways.

He is the one who interviewed us and got us on our way to Africa." J. Calvin Bright: "As a child in China I looked eagerly for his coming. The Chinese Christians loved him dearly. He had a deep affection for the people."

His soul made an impact upon the souls of others. It was not so much what he said but he who said it. His appeal came from his person, not from his lips. He loved to speak, but he loved his hearers more.

He was conscious of his limitations and was very humble concerning them. He said that he had felt poorly prepared for the large responsibilities which the church had placed upon him. This feeling caused him to realize that it was far more the power of God than his own power which made his work acceptable.

He was fair and adjustable, with the best interests of the people at heart. His fairness for every aspect of an issue made him seem to contradict himself at times. Someone commented, "He could talk the prettiest on both sides of the question." As the board's secretary he would present items for the consideration of the board members in its meetings. Otho Winger, the chairman, quick at decision and pronounced in his convictions, would become restless when Brother Bonsack would present an issue, speaking on one side and then on the other, and would ask, with a touch of impatience, "Brother Bonsack, which side are you on?"

If Brother Bonsack seemed too adjustable it was because people mattered more than dogma. His main concern was not for forms or methods, but for what value people might derive from them. For example, he was

not primarily for a certain cut of garment but for the people, and if the people saw value in a certain cut he was for the people. It is reported that in Pennsylvania a brother said to him, "Your hat isn't right." "You fix it," replied Brother Bonsack. The man took out the crease, making it as nearly as possible a hat like those worn by the plain people. Brother Bonsack went next to Maryland. There a brother said, "Your hat isn't right." "Please fix it for me," said Brother Bonsack. The man put the crease back in where it had been. Brother Bonsack thanked him, and no more was said about the matter.

Brother Bonsack had a world view far ahead of that of the church. He was so Brethren that the Brethren liked him and espoused his view—not because they fully understood it but because it was so sincerely woven into the spirit of the one they wanted to accept. When he first became officially associated with the mission cause the Brethren were just beginning to emerge from a restrictive, aloof position in relation to other church and mission groups. He helped the church to think ecumenically. Under his leadership the Brethren came to be known among other Christian bodies as a group sincerely desiring to co-operate with them in the Christian world enterprise.

But his broad-mindedness never subtracted from his loyalty to Brethren missions. He always contended that a man could not be helpful to other groups without first demonstrating his enthusiasm for and interest in his own; and he often illustrated his contention by saying that a husband needed to be loyal to his own wife in order to respect other men's wives properly.

The Christians in the mission churches loved and trusted him. What Brother P. G. Bhagat says was felt by all: "The basic principles of the church were grounded in his mind. He loved the church and lived for her. There was burning zeal in his heart for missions. He was a real Christian to me."

The staffs of the various missions respected him personally and trusted his judgment in relation to their work. Whether in contact with him by correspondence, during his visits to the mission fields, or during their furloughs, they found him understanding and sympathetic with their personal problems as well as with their mission problems.

H. Stover Kulp, who was an active missionary in Nigeria during all of Brother Bonsack's twenty years as secretary, wrote a letter in 1952 on the occasion of Brother Bonsack's sixty years in the ministry. We share his letter with you, for it illustrates many of the other points named above, as well as the attitude of the missionaries.

"It is certainly a happy privilege to be among those to express congratulations and appreciation to Brother Bonsack on the completion of sixty years in the Christian ministry. We have all been looking upon him in these recent years as the 'elder statesman' in the mission work. My more intimate acquaintance with him began in my first year of pastoral work just after getting out of college. Brother Bonsack came to hold meetings for us at New Enterprise. I then had my application in for missionary service but wanted to get some pastoral experience and also continue a bit of school work. I was being urged to

take the pastorate more or less permanently. I asked Brother Bonsack's opinion, saying that it seemed as though I was needed there and that the church wanted me to remain as their pastor. I have always remembered Brother Bonsack's reply to me: 'If you would not be wanted in America, we would not want you on the mission field.'

"We remember with very deep appreciation his visits to us on the Africa mission field. What a welcome guest he was! His visit the first time helped in a very large way to have the Africans in our area realize that the Christian faith was a thing which mature and stable people were following and not something which a few young enthusiasts were advocating. Old men who saw him on his visits continue to remember him and ask about him even to this day. But we appreciated him most of all for his sage counsel in our mission work. I am sure that all of the members of the Africa mission staff would wish to be associated with me in this expression of appreciation. We would assure him of our continued prayers. Surely the Church of the Brethren and the cause of Christian missions have been richly blessed by the labors of this servant of God."

J. M. Blough writes: "All the missionaries appreciated him greatly, for correspondence with him was so satisfactory. They felt they could bring all their problems to him and knew that they would receive careful attention. He was kind and fatherly in his correspondence and sympathetic with our difficulties. When he came to the field as the senior member of a deputation we learned to know him and appreciate him best of all, for we found

him a sound counselor, a valiant defender of the faith, a real missionary himself, and one who understood world-wide mission problems. His work on the deputation team was admirable and most satisfactory."

Anna Crumpacker adds her appreciation: "Several impressions stand out vividly when I think of Brother Bonsack's two visits to China. (1) He could take hardships and inconveniences with a smile or a good laugh. (2) He honestly tried to understand and solve the difficult problems confronting the mission. Sometimes he would pour on the Balm of Gilead, sometimes severely criticize. He spent long hours in general conferences and private interviews trying to reach the right solutions. (3) He greeted everyone wholeheartedly. The rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the old and the young all felt the warmth of his love and his fervent 'God bless you.' (4) His messages helped his hearers to love the way of the cross. Who knows the measure of his part in building the faith of the many Christians who have made the supreme sacrifice in the last years of great suffering and sorrow in China!"

Gladys Royer says, "Brother Bonsack had a fatherly way with missionaries. He could scold them, tell them what they ought to do, and do it in such a nice way they liked him for it."

He was versatile. His work as a mission secretary engaged in the administration of a world mission program covered an amazingly broad line of activity. He was responsible for preparing reports of the work for the board and the Brotherhood. His work included enlistment of

new workers, securing their appointment, directing their preparation, and arranging for their sailing. There was constant correspondence with mission officials and with the missionaries personally. Emergency situations in missionary families had to be met. And ever there was the necessity of keeping the mission work before the people of the church and enlisting their financial support. Trying to enumerate his duties as a mission secretary would be like trying to itemize the details of a mother's work.

His service to the church was not highly compartmentalized. One could not think of him as a board secretary only for he was a churchman. Nor could he be considered only a churchman for he was identified consistently as a board secretary.

The following excerpts from a resolution by the General Brotherhood Board may be considered as being typical of the appreciation felt by the church as a whole for the services rendered by Brother Bonsack during his fruitful years of work.

In the death of Brother Charles D. Bonsack, one of the great leaders of the Church of the past generation has gone to his reward. In view of his great service to the Church through many years as pastor, college executive, Mission Board member, and its long-time secretary, as special preacher and conciliator, and in recognition of his gracious spirit of Christian friendliness,

We thank Almighty God for raising up among us a great servant of the Church, and from his example of devotion we dedicate our lives to a more complete consecration to our responsibilities.

Signed by

V. F. Schwalm

T. F. Henry

Newton Long

That Brother Bonsack's labors were successful may be seen from noting some of the advances made in the mission work of the church during the twenty years of his secretaryship. In 1922 a new mission was begun in Nigeria, British West Africa. The young churches in foreign lands took on new life, increasing their membership significantly. The increased giving of the home church to foreign missions made it possible to send a larger number of missionaries to the three mission fields. Above all, Church of the Brethren foreign mission work became widely known in interdenominational circles for its practical, evangelical program, as well as its ability to do the most possible with the money given by the home church.

In 1940 the General Mission Board appointed Leland S. Brubaker as secretary of the board with the understanding that during the ensuing year he would be given the privilege of going to school. In 1941 Brother Bonsack became advisory secretary to the General Mission Board.

His long years of experience in foreign mission administration, his keen ability in seeing the practical solutions to problems, and his deep faith in the adequacy of the gospel made him a very valuable counselor for the next several years. He was always ready and willing to help on any item that was presented to him for counsel and advice.

Unusual recognition of Brother Bonsack's missionary renown was made in 1930 by Merrill Blosser, an artist with a Brethren background who had attended Blue Ridge College while Brother Bonsack was the acting president of the institution, and who for many years

has produced the comic strip, *Freckles*. In the first scene of a sequence, Freckles is shown reading a bulletin board, which says: "Dr. Bonsack, missionary to India, will speak at the Geyer Auditorium Tuesday evening, April 15."

During his twenty years as secretary of the General Mission Board Brother Bonsack made many friends in the Foreign Mission Conference of North America, of which he was a member. He knew the members of the conference by their first names. His hearty handshake, his genial disposition, his interest in people—all these endeared him to his comrades in the mission cause. Many times he led them in their devotional periods and always with merit. Even after he no longer attended these meetings, his friends would ask about him and would remark about the down-to-earth devotional periods which he had led while a member. Even today, his friends in the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America still remark about his radiant Christian life.



World Traveler

Few in the Church of the Brethren have covered more miles in America and abroad in church service than did Brother Bonsack. But it is not the mere shuttling back and forth for fifty years, especially in this age, that constitutes any great achievement. When Brother Bonsack traveled, something usually happened at either end of his journey as well as to souls along the way. Moreover, Brother Bonsack himself was continually acquiring knowledge and taking on increased spiritual maturity so that at each destination he had something to deliver. It is safe to add that no one in his travels both gave and received more. His were not personal trips taken on his own initiative. He was sent by the board purposefully on each of four trips abroad, in America he was called by local churches

and districts, and he was much sought for committee service and personal interviews. His four trips abroad were significant to the Brotherhood.

FIRST TRIP ABROAD

In May 1907 the General Missionary and Tract Committee appointed Henry C. Early and Galen B. Royer, secretary, as a committee to visit its European work in Denmark, Sweden, France, and Switzerland. Brother Early being unable to go in July 1907, Brother Bonsack was appointed to go with Brother Royer.

The December minutes of the committee record the vote to close the work in Switzerland, to secure a brother and a sister to superintend the work in Scandinavia, and to secure help for the work in France. This experience in evaluating a foreign work was valuable for the larger assignments Brother Bonsack would bear in later years.

THE SECOND TRIP

By 1926 our work in China was eighteen years old. The church had a staff of forty-nine consecrated and capable workers in that field. Many problems in transferring Brethren faith and practice and in discerning the right emphasis in evangelism, education, and the organizing of the church confronted the mission. The Chinese membership had grown to one thousand and more than one hundred Chinese workers were employed. China as a country was in turmoil.

The General Mission Board, desiring help on some difficult issues in China, addressed to the 1926 Annual

Conference, held at Lincoln, Nebraska, this message: "Greetings! Because of some problems which touch church doctrine and polity arising from national customs in the growing churches on our mission fields, the General Mission Board asks Conference, through Standing Committee, to appoint a committee of five to study these problems and report next year." Answer of Conference: "Request granted." Committee — J. J. Yoder, A. C. Wieand, I. W. Taylor, D. W. Kurtz, T. T. Myers.

The love feast as an ordinance, including the service of feet-washing, had become a problem. In China the practice of mutilating the feet of little girls and then tightly binding them meant misshapen and often sore feet for the women. Furthermore, very little bathing of feet was normal in the poorly heated homes during the long Chinese winters. The baring of feet at a spiritual service of the church was reported as seeming repugnant to sensitive Chinese Christians. The board at home and the missionaries had been encouraging the Chinese church to assume increasing responsibility for evangelizing, for self-support, and for determining the policies of the newborn and growing church. When the love feast was held omitting the service of feet-washing, some of the missionaries were greatly concerned. The same was true among faithful members of the church in America. It was generally felt that basic doctrines and ordinances should and could be held and practiced by Brethren converts on any mission field. Loss of confidence in the board and in the missionaries as faithful representatives of the teaching of the Scriptures was threatened. It was

this problem and others less difficult that had caused the board to turn to Standing Committee to ask that a committee study the issues.

The board, following a conference with the Standing Committee, announced the sending of Brethren Bonsack and Yoder to China, and also to India, Denmark, and Sweden. Brother Yoder had already made one world missionary tour, being with J. H. B. Williams when he died at Mombasa.

As they traveled, the members of the deputation were alert observers of life in the various countries they visited and were quick to see how events and trends in one area were certain to influence life elsewhere in this rapidly shrinking world. Illustrative of this are these excerpts from Brother Bonsack's diary which record with almost prophetic insight their impressions of Japan: "The Japanese are serious minded, intelligent looking, hard-working, studious. In cars they read books more than papers. Ricksha men read serious books. . . . Our impressions of the Japanese are [that they are] a rather wonderful people. But they have not the years of civilization to make it [their civilization] deep or dependable yet. Moreover, their religion would tend to interfere with a rapid development of conscience and moral integrity. It develops great loyalty and patriotism to their emperor and country, but breeds fear of foreigners and lacks appreciation of the moral values of conduct in Christian lands." Also noted and commented on was the rapid industrial development of Japan.

Upon arrival in China the deputation, after warm

greetings, soon found themselves earnestly discussing with the missionaries and the Chinese Christians the problems of the mission. Brother Bonsack's diary of the visit to China is reminiscent of certain New Testament accounts of differences of viewpoint which were hard to reconcile. His writing indicates that the missionaries had divided viewpoints and were needing contact with the home church and sympathetic encouragement for the facing of their many problems.

The manner of organizing the work, the right and wrong ways to use foreign money, and the type of buildings to erect for schools, churches, and missionary residences are additional samples of the issues faced. The missionaries sincerely wanted and needed counsel from the home base.

The mission board, in its policy of sending deputations to its foreign fields, was often confronted with questions bordering on criticism raised by sincere people as to the necessity for such expense. The questioners assumed that missionaries on the field knew the problems and could solve them better than any visiting secretary or board members. Brother Bonsack spent many hours in America interpreting the need for visits by representatives from the home board.

Administrative problems bulk large in an official deputation tour. These do not consume all the time or becloud the inspiring picture of consecrated missionaries at work, of boys and girls, men and women learning of Jesus and accepting him as Lord and Savior. Brother Bonsack wrote of an impressive baptismal service in which

Brother Oberholtzer and the evangelist gave very thorough instruction, with much Scripture reading. Two women and four men were baptized at this outstation. A love feast was held that evening; concerning it Brother Bonsack wrote, "Washed the feet of my first Chinese brother."

In his diary Brother Bonsack also stated some of his impressions: "1. Difficulty of reaching the territory and the people. 2. If the home church knew, it would be in deeper prayer,—Oh! How we must pray! 3. Chinese Christians must carry the real burden of winning Chinese but the missionary must keep in sympathetic touch."

The difference between the mission and the church came in for much discussion. In the early days of the China field there was only a mission. As soon as there were Chinese converts these became the foundation for the Chinese church. Brother Bonsack indicated that the missionaries had been busy in their schools, hospitals, and outstations winning converts to Christ but that there was much need for clarified thinking on setting up the church. He was never one inclined to stress organization, but he and Brother Yoder conferred at length on establishing the church so that it would be a separate body and not necessarily identical with or wholly dependent on the mission. The wisdom of that emphasis is very apparent now in 1954, since the mission with foreign workers is not permitted in China. Any and all experience in bearing responsibility is now valuable to the Chinese church.

Having shared the interest and counsel of the home board and church with the missionaries and the Chinese

Christians, the deputation moved on and arrived in India on January 23, 1927. For twenty years Brother Bonsack, and eighteen years Brother Yoder, had been serving on the General Mission Board, making decisions affecting the work in India. It now seemed vitally important to have a personal visit with the missionaries and the Indian Christians on their own ground. Brother Yoder had visited India in 1921. The mission had been started in 1894. In the first thirty years the membership had grown to over three thousand. Paid Indian workers numbered over two hundred. The value of property totaled \$400,000.00.

Missionaries had been making good efforts to separate the mission and the church. This brought problems. The poverty of the common people made it seem a humanitarian necessity to use American money to pay workers. For economic reasons the Indian workers were unable to serve as free ministers and the Christians were either too impoverished or too inexperienced in giving to support their own pastors and teachers. This situation called for many conferences of missionaries and the deputation. Devolution—the transferring of responsibility as well as support from the mission to the church—received much consideration without a clear, or at least an easy and quickly applied, solution.

Here, as in China, the deputation was impressed by the faithful devotion and the hard work of the missionaries. The writer remembers hearing Brother Bonsack tell of Elsie Shickel, very thin and worn, who was working long hours with the girls in the Anklesvar school. Said he, "Elsie, you'll die if you don't quit working so hard."

"Brother Bonsack, these girls are worth dying for," was her ready reply.

After two months, which seemed all too short, the deputation sailed for America but stopped enroute to review the work in Denmark and Sweden. Their arrival in New York on May 22 coincided with Lindbergh's transoceanic flight. In his diary Brother Bonsack wrote, "This flight of Captain Charles Lindbergh is likely to be a historic event." Might he have been foreseeing the day when missionaries would travel by air to and from their fields of service? Or that communication by letter to the most distant field would be possible in less than one week in contrast to six weeks or two months by boat?

THE THIRD TRIP

On August 16, 1928, in company with J. B. Emmert, formerly a missionary to India and at that time a member of the board, Brother Bonsack set forth with Nigeria as his ultimate destination. A missions conference at Leopoldville, in the Belgian Congo, was the first objective. After the conference, a number of other missions were visited, and much valuable information was received.

On November 7 the Brethren station, Garkida, was reached. The work in Nigeria, dating from 1922, was just six years old. The early missionaries included Kulp, Helser, Beahm, Mallott, Gibbel, Heckman, Harper, Shisler, Flohr, and Burke. These good workers were all capable, independent-thinking servants of Christ, seeking in this new land to win the black man to Christ and to

establish the Christian church. They wanted to profit by the experiences of our older missions.

The deputation journeyed from station to station, visiting with the mission families, talking with the Bura natives, always of necessity through an interpreter, looking over sites for expansion and ever evaluating the qualities of our workers and the program of the mission. The love feast, with feet-washing, seemed appreciated by the native people and the meaning of this symbolical service better understood than Brother Bonsack had found it to be in China. Polygamy was an uppermost issue since it was both widely practiced and definitely contrary to Christian thought. For the Bura his economic wealth was often expressed in the number of his wives.

There were differences of viewpoint among the able and independent-thinking missionaries. Getting a new mission started along right lines was very important and probably easier than correcting errors in later years. Important questions considered by the missionaries and the deputation included: the location of mission stations; how to staff these centers; how to find and develop Bura leaders; what education they should have; whether the mission should have a training school; how much government money should be sought or accepted in the school program; who should be the person to approach the government officially; where in this low, flat country could missionaries' children have a school with a healthful climate; how finance it; and how much the new leper colony work should be extended. Brethren Bonsack and

Emmert were good counselors and as the board's representatives served as referees.

Repeatedly in Brother Bonsack's notes he refers to lonesomeness for his Ida, from whom his travels took him more than he liked. But he always found some compensating values. I remember him expounding on the great spiritual bond between loved ones which was very real and blessed even when great distances were between them.

Brother Bonsack closed his journal on Africa thus:

"To Africa, to Africa, to see a job big!
Home again, home again, jiggety jig!"

THE FOURTH TRIP

The fourth world journey for Brother Bonsack commenced on August 27, 1934. Leland S. Brubaker, pastor of the Covina church, California, and a member of the board, was also officially appointed a member of the deputation. J. K. Miller, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a lay member of the board, at his own expense became the third member of the deputation.

By this time Brother Bonsack was a seasoned traveler and much accustomed to facing administrative issues on mission fields. Even so, his diary records: "Facing the responsibilities of this trip tries the best that is in us. The future of the church in its mission fields may be helped or hindered. Every missionary must have fair consideration with [his] problems and work."

This sober, thoughtful mood grew out of a heavy assignment to help solve personnel problems on the

Nigeria field. Paul, in his New Testament missionary work, experienced personnel problems and it seemed that the passing of centuries had not changed human nature in this regard.

Upon arrival in Nigeria, they were met by Clarence Heckman at Damatura. The luggage was loaded on the mission truck and on the heads of African carriers, with the new Marama mission station as their destination. In a few days the field committee of the mission came to Marama to greet the deputation and to discuss the work of the mission. The item uppermost in the minds of all was the future personal and official relationships of able comrades on the field.

A new mission cannot be started except by vigorous persons who have felt deeply the call of God, have given up homeland and loved ones, and have gone forth with deep conviction. What happens when such strong persons disagree as to the proper procedure for a beginning mission? Holding strongly for a certain plan or principle may represent a conviction regarding the future outcome of the work.

It has been observed that a mission led entirely by priests would die of emptiness; one composed wholly of prophets is in danger of convulsions. As one thinks of the vigorous personalities in the early days of the Nigeria mission, he can imagine the problems. To help harmonize differing viewpoints and ways of procedure was the assignment given to Brethren Bonsack, Brubaker, and Miller.

This sketch of Brother Bonsack's life is not the place to discuss at length any one problem. It is, however, in

place to say that this personnel issue was one of the most difficult he ever had to face, as an excerpt from his diary suggests:

"We want to record that in this conference there was manifest the most gracious spirit amid very convinced differences of opinion and personal adaptability. There was the frankest statement of differences in feeling and judgment concerning each other, and in the presence of each other, that only Christian missionaries tested and true could make. There was no mud-slinging at all, and less personal bitterness than I have ever seen in any similar conference with such differences.

"I would want to add that there was no difference in any fundamental Christian truth. . . . The Africa Mission is a unit in the propagation of evangelical Christianity and the doctrines of the church that sent them forth. Neither does there seem to be much difference of opinion in policy of work as to the best way of reaching the desired end of creating a church in Africa. The difference seems in temperament and adaptability, the relative importance of institutions and their place and use in laying foundations for permanent and growing indigenous churches in Africa."

The deputation was eager to visit all the work in the mission. Nine people were asking for baptism. A question was raised whether these nine needed more instruction or if they should be baptized at once with instruction to follow. Brother Bonsack wrote, "In this land, when is one a proper candidate for baptism? Here again, one can never be too cocksure. . . . We have a

conviction that at home and here, baptism needs to be followed with definite and sympathetic teaching."

The deputation was impressed by the kindly spirit of the black people. Brother Bonsack said, "How we wanted to speak to them in Bura but we could only touch their beards and smile."

Visiting the leper colony at Garkida, with its population of four hundred, brought mingled emotions. Many of the residents of the colony were toeless and fingerless victims of this ancient disease. Cheer was noted in their faces because of the love, medical care, and hope which the mission had brought them.

The crowded days included visiting in the homes of the missionaries and in each instance entering intimately into their family joys or sorrows and discussing their deep experiences of faith, purpose, and work. Evening services of prayer and song were held in their homes. Of these services Brother Bonsack wrote: "Such evenings in a mission station, where hearts are touched, are always helpful."

What an experience it was to see two hundred seventy-three pupils at the four-year elementary school studying reading, writing, arithmetic, hygiene, and Bible! The members of the deputation shared in public meetings. On one occasion Brother Miller gave an interesting talk at the chapel service in the elementary school. One Sunday Brother Brubaker preached to the three hundred persons assembled for worship. Brother Bonsack spoke on various occasions.

Inspection of the hospital erected in memory of Ruth

Royer Kulp brought afresh the memory of Sister Kulp and of others who gave their lives in the path of service. To see scientific treatment given with Christian love in a land accustomed to witch doctors warmed the hearts of the deputation.

Market day with one thousand people milling about the corn, beef, fish, gourds, earthen pots, and native mixtures was a sight—and the smells were equally arresting. One of the native Christians was preaching to the crowd but attention seemed centered on the activities of the market more than on the message of life.

Meeting with native Christian groups over two hours to discuss, through an interpreter, the Christian faith and the church, brought out many things. Polygamy, a deeply rooted and prevalent social practice, seemed an uppermost issue. This conference revealed the perplexing, irritating nature of this problem in the creation of Christian home life. The native Christian leaders seemed more inclined to sin on the side of justice than on the side of mercy in deciding the standard for practice. Other questions discussed included Mohammedanism, the need for more teachers, and the urgency for increased medical service.

The frank, penetrating, and extensive diary by Brother Bonsack on the program, purpose, experiences, conferences, and personnel of the work in Nigeria would in itself be material for a book, but we must mention other fields as part of this journey.

At Capetown, December 19, 1934, mail from home and a cablegram from Elgin church friends brought news

that all were well. "I never received a more appreciated Christmas present," wrote Brother Bonsack.

On January 8 their ship touched Mombasa, and by the grave of J. H. B. Williams, beloved secretarial predecessor of Brother Bonsack, they meditated and prayed. A large, magnificent mango tree, symbol of India, where Brother Williams last served, spread its protective arms out toward the grave. Brother Bonsack remembered the heartbreaking experience in Elgin when he needed to report the death news to Sister Williams and her family. Mail received at Mombasa included copies of the *Gospel Messenger*, which were read on the ship as the deputation journeyed to India. "What a privilege to read the Messenger out here on the Indian Ocean!" the diary records.

As their ship brought them in sight of the dock at Bombay they looked forward eagerly to the reception they would get from Lynn A. and Mary Blickenstaff at the Raj Mahal Hostel. Here there would be baths with hot water and delightful rest and fellowship. Their anticipations were more than realized, for Brethren J. M. Blough, I. W. Moomaw, and L. A. Blickenstaff greeted them at the dock.

This was Brother Bonsack's second visit to India. One of the greatest joys would be seeing the Indian Christians he had met and loved on the visit eight years earlier. The welfare of the Indian people and their growth in Christ being the central purpose of missions, it would warm an old secretary's heart to break spiritual bread with them again.

Rapid visits to the nine mission stations enabled the

deputation to meet the missionaries, to size up the progress made and the issues needing study, and to plan for conferences and reports to the home board. At Anklesvar they saw one hundred twenty-five students in the Rhodes Memorial Vocational Training College. Brother Bonsack was impressed with the potential of these students to change thought and life in India.

Missionaries D. J. and Anna Lichty took the Brethren to Jitali for twenty-four hours with them in their tent evangelism. Over five hundred people came to see and hear. Brother Lichty explained that caste opposition prevented many secret inquirers from openly becoming Christians. The opposition expressed itself by denying Christians opportunity to earn a satisfactory living.

The district meeting had a good program. Concern arose in Brother Bonsack's mind lest the district meeting assume too much a controlling and administering function, taking from the local churches a responsibility they should bear. The relative importance attached to institutions, i.e., schools and hospitals, as compared to the local church, was a related issue.

Brother Bonsack, at the district meeting, spoke on *What Is Expected of the Church in India?* He pointed up the error of people who think of the church as an institution in which they can exercise authority or from which they can get selfish personal advantage.

Leaving India, the brethren journeyed to China, which seemed home to Brother Brubaker because of three happy and useful years spent in Shansi. All of the stations and some outstations were visited. At Liao Chou on

May 19 a large congregation assembled for the morning church service. An hour was consumed in instructing applicants for baptism. Forty-four men and women were baptized by the Chinese pastor. The chief magistrate of the city was present and expressed much interest.

The missionaries planned a retreat for spiritual enrichment and discussion. The theme was *Christian Churches in the Villages of China*. The Chinese Christians were included in this retreat and expressed their views. At the close of the morning service three deacons and their wives were inducted into office.

A great concern of the board and the missionaries is the establishing of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches. The goal is the day when a new church can do these three things as well as established churches in America do. The deputation could not visit a field without this subject receiving attention.

In the closing days of the visit to China the experience of the free ministry among the Brethren in America was considered. Should Chinese village churches have pastors or lay leaders? If lay leaders, should there be supervision, and, if so, how? The poverty of the people and their lack of pattern make difficult an unsalaried ministry such as has served Brethren churches in America. Paid workers in certain situations seem necessary, but to pay some workers discourages others from working on a voluntary basis.

At Shanghai the deputation attended a meeting of the National Christian Council of China. About one

hundred delegates had come to discuss problems and progress. H. C. Yin, from the Ping Ting church in Shansi, attended. Dr. John R. Mott was one of the speakers. Brother Bonsack, reporting one of the sessions, wrote: "This meeting was given to consideration of work in the rural areas of China. Church work in the west has been organized on the idea of churches being groups financially able to provide pastoral care, at least with the help of home mission boards. But on the mission fields this plan seems impossible, if we are to get these smaller churches to feel their own sense of responsibility. The conclusion reached was to provide lay leadership in each small village church and to try [to] provide one well-trained experienced man to have advisory care over ten to twenty village churches. We were glad to have Brother Yin with us. He is our pastor at Ping Ting Chow and was the delegate from the church and mission to the Council. He is a real Christian statesman and [is] interested in the deeper things of the Christian life."

We return our three brethren through the 'Frisco Golden Gate, July 24, 1935, to their loved ones at home.

Needless to say, the Brethren at home were eager for Brother Bonsack to come to their local churches and district meetings to interpret the modern "Acts of the Apostles." This he was willing and able to do, perhaps to their liking as much as or more than any mission interpreter the Church of the Brethren has known.

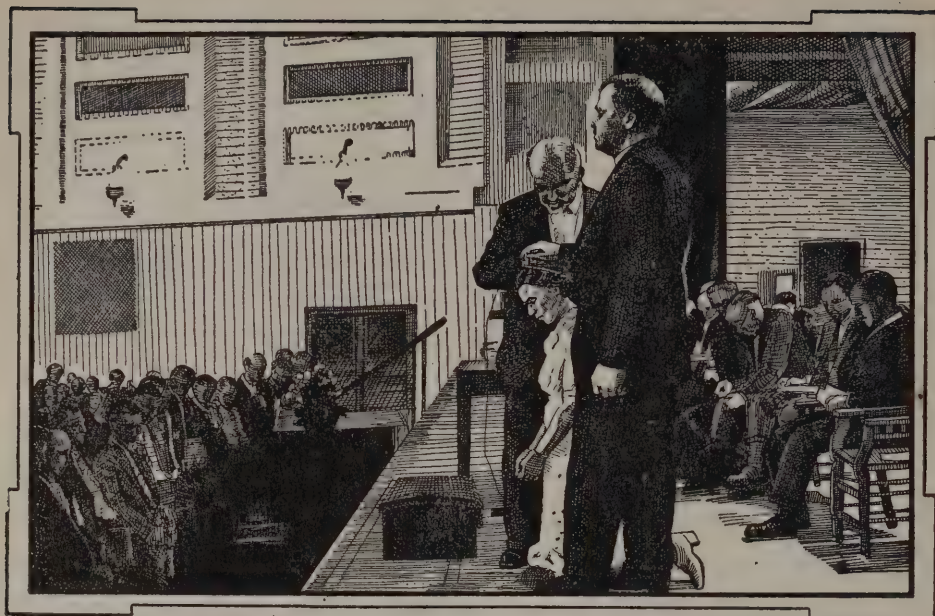
In his book, *Sharing Observations With the Home Church*, based on his diary notes made on this last trip, Brother Bonsack evaluated the mission situation.

Perhaps there is no cause in the world that has so many ardent supporters, and at the same time so many critics, as has Christian missions. Both of these groups are found in the home churches as well as on the mission field. Both are more or less sincere in the positions they take. The difference is caused by what they are looking for and by what they do not know about mission work.

. . . missions suffer much from the ignorance of both friends and foes. Friends have given millions to establish a doctrine, theory or organization instead of sharing hope in the Redeemer of men. Others have supported unwittingly the plans and methods of particular enthusiasts, and opposed others, not knowing the values of either. Opponents at home say missions are ineffective, create irritations, are not wanted, and a host of other things which equally reflect misrepresentation and a general ignorance.

. . . the greatest need of modern missionaries . . . [is] to interpret the gospel in terms of a people's thinking. There is no gospel principle that is not of universal application, though these principles have different applications in the life of different peoples. Principles needing emphasis at one place may not be needed at another. The simple life needs a new discovery and emphasis in our western civilization; but not in the interior of Africa! America may need to take time to be holy, but in India they need something more than time. Many have already used a lot of that without much success.

As an interpreter of truth, of conditions, and of the meaning of situations, Brother Bonsack shone as a bright star. He gave spirit and meaning to the Great Commission. He had earned the confidence of the common man and commanded the respect of the intelligentsia. Even when members in home churches were divided and had developed strong feelings and prejudices, he could build a bridge on which both sides could meet in thought, understanding, and love.



General Service to the Church

Life has its dimensions, perpendicular and horizontal, upward and outward. Brother Bonsack experienced a full-dimensional life. He looked up to God and out to his fellow human beings, and in turn they looked to him. In giving some counsel to a group of young people, he wrote, "Above all, look up and live." He himself followed this counsel and enjoyed great heights of Christian thought and experience.

His breadth of life was also pronounced. He lived nearly eighty-four years. He served over sixty years in the ministry. Of him one could say that he fulfilled the aim of life as expressed by Phillip James Bailey:

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.
And he whose heart beats quickest lives the longest.

—From *Festus*

His practical interpretation of the gospel made him useful at home and his world view made him wanted as an interpreter in regions beyond. The church used him in many areas.

Early in his church life he was given a task in connection with the peace witness of the church. During the days of 1917 a situation became critical for the church and especially for the young men of draft age. Young men were unprepared to meet the test of giving valid reasons why they were conscientious objectors to war. Many suffered persecution. Appeals were sent to the home ministers for guidance. Special district meetings were called to meet emergencies and to attempt to formulate some policies of action. Elder H. C. Early, moderator of the Annual Conference in June 1917, was deluged with requests that something be done. Eventually, with some opposition, a special Conference was held at Goshen, Indiana, on January 7, 1918. The Brethren in Maryland had been stirred earlier to do something for the young men being called to camp. The Eastern District of Maryland called a special district meeting and invited the surrounding districts to send representatives. This meeting was held at New Windsor in the late fall of 1917. As one outgrowth of the discussion which took place, Charles

D. Bonsack was selected as pastor for the young men in Camp Meade.

The Church of the Brethren in its inception took the position that war is sin. Out of this grew the term *conscientious objector*. In some periods of the church's life there was little if any general endeavor in peace-making. Brother Bonsack must have been eager for more than the objector position. This writer seldom witnessed him leading out in that aspect of the church doctrine. Never did I see him stand up making bold statements which would incur the condemnation or suspicion of military authorities. His broad grasp of situations gave him keen understanding with those responsible for government and their problems during a war period. His thinking and activity seemed more in the realm of conciliation. He was a personal conciliator rather than an organizer for conciliation. He recognized that in renouncing violence the church was put into a crisis to find another way. He was enthusiastic about the relief and reconstruction activities of the church. His contribution lay more in espousing the spirit of reconciliation than in administering a program for it.

In the Church of the Brethren, Annual Conference is the general meeting of delegates from the churches in America and abroad. The Standing Committee is composed of delegates sent from church districts. Brother Bonsack was sent in 1910 as a delegate from Eastern Maryland to the Standing Committee. After the Bonsacks moved to Elgin, the District of Northern Illinois and Wisconsin elected him to positions of service, the most

noted being: moderator of district conference, 1924, 1929, 1931, 1936, 1941, 1945; Standing Committee delegate, 1923, 1930, 1932, 1950; chairman or member of district board of administration, 1930-1934, 1935-1936, 1940-1941, 1944-1945; trustee of Manchester College (at large, confirmed by the district), 1942-1948.

The General Conference elected him to serve as its moderator in the 1933 Conference held at Hershey, Pennsylvania. The moderatorship is regarded as the most prominent assignment the church gives to any person. His predecessor in 1932 was D. W. Kurtz and his successor in 1934 was Otho Winger. H. K. Ober was the reader and J. E. Miller was the secretary. E. S. Coffman served as messenger, with DeWitt Miller as assistant. Greetings from India were signed by D. J. Lichty and Mary Shull; from China by Anna Crumpacker, Olivia D. Ikenberry, and Frances S. Smith; from Sweden by Glen E. Norris. The committee to formulate greetings to foreign fields was I. S. Long, Harlan Brooks, and F. E. Mallott.

Many items in that Conference reflect the financial depression, which was at its sorest level. Committees reported work undone because of expense in holding meetings; help to home mission churches could not be given; Brotherhood giving dropped to a new low of \$139,690.00. Bethany Biblical Seminary reported a seminary enrollment of only thirty-six students; two faculty members had been dropped; and salaries of other faculty members had been only sixty per cent met. The General Mission Board voted that its officers and the

missionaries should return to the treasury ten per cent of salaries received.

Queries and business engaging the Conference that year included the deaconship, divorce and remarriage, international goodwill, pooling expense of Standing Committee members, protesting military taxes, marriage by civil officers, and a special day of prayer.

Serious issues engaged the church throughout the lifetime of Brother Bonsack. In the attempt to cope with them he was much used as a committee member. The church felt that he was objective in his thinking and could see all sides of an issue; that he would be impartial in his decisions; and, perhaps most of all, that his name attached to a committee's report would help the members of the church to accept it.

The 1911 dress committee's report was a historic document. "Concerning conformity to the world in wearing fashionable clothing and everything that is high" (Article 2, 1817) was the preface to an action of Annual Meeting nearly one hundred years earlier. The church through the years, even from its founding in 1708, had stressed an inner allegiance to Christ, with an outward manifestation not only in clothing, but in the avoidance of foolish fashions of the world generally. The church took this position seriously and to make its meaning clear had prescribed a cut of clothing that should be worn.

Instead of harmony resulting from the action of Conference, dissension developed, and the church divided. The ultraconservative element, known as the Old Order Brethren, left the church about 1881. In 1883 those

holding views almost diametrically opposed formed a separate organization known as the Brethren Church. The members of the remaining central body were probably well united in principle on the subject of the spiritual life but not in the matter of legislation as to the cut of clothing. Annual Conference had received and adopted many articles on the subject but there was no clear understanding or acceptance of Conference decisions. The 1910 Conference voted that the entire issue "be recommitted to a committee of five faithful, intelligent, conservative brethren, who are hereby instructed to take the whole matter under advisement and to make a restatement reducing all the teachings of the Conference on Christian attire to one plain and concise minute." The committee was H. C. Early, John Heckman, Galen B. Royer, C. D. Bonsack and J. W. Lear.

The committee was faithful to its assignment. The Conference of 1911 adopted, with revisions, its report. Brother Bonsack's part in the committee was significant. While he joined in the report as adopted, he was concerned about the mandatory application of an order of dress and the discipline of members who failed to conform. He contributed to the committee a paper emphasizing spiritual teaching and counseling great care in using Conference legislation to discipline members. Here are excerpts from his paper:

"The question of dress, to maintain modesty and simplicity of apparel among its members, has vexed the church in all ages. In our teaching, we should, as children of the light, be leaders to others in their

deliverance from the sin and tyranny of fashion, and our position should be one in advance of the age and not behind it. A help and not a hindrance. Positive rather than negative. Non-conformity has no value except when the result is a transformation by a renewed mind—Romans 12:2. Remembering the difficulty of making rules to meet all conditions under all circumstances, we urge great care and forbearance in the application of such, especially toward the weak and untaught as well as the younger in years—Galatians 6:1.”

Brother Bonsack’s point of view influenced many people in the church. He believed in and practiced Christian simplicity of life but he had very little faith in demanding it by coercion or discipline based on legislative action.

Brother Bonsack prayed and worked for unity. He joined those who wanted to restore fellowship where it had been broken. The Conference for years maintained a fraternal relations committee to keep contact with similar committees in other denominations. Brother Bonsack served well as a member of this committee.

Fellowship among the Brethren, notwithstanding the meaningful name, from time to time strikes rough spots. The Standing Committee in a number of instances has appointed an advisory committee to counsel with those who have failed for some reason to keep a harmonious working fellowship. Brother Bonsack was named to serve with James M. Moore and I. S. Long on such a committee to the elders of Middle Pennsylvania. He was used much as a harmonizer even without an official appointment.

Membership in the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America was for a number of years a disturbing question. Many members felt that the church should relate itself to this co-operative Protestant movement. The Conference entered officially into a constituent relationship. Some members and groups felt deeply and were very vocal in their opposition to any relation with the Federal Council. A committee on understanding, composed of Charles D. Bonsack, James M. Moore, and J. W. Lear, was appointed. The committee worked by correspondence and by visiting churches and persons.

A pastor who disagreed rather vehemently with the action of the Conference wrote, indicating his attitude toward the Brotherhood program: "I regret to say that my participation in the general program of the Brotherhood will be somewhat curtailed. My convictions will not permit me to support activities which, I feel, are misdirected."

A quotation from Brother Bonsack's reply says: "You also bring your refusal to support the general program of the Brotherhood. I do not agree with everything that is being done in every department of this work either; but if I held a pastorate, which I do not have now, I think I would find something in the general program of the church that I could support heartily. All of us may have our preferences; but it is a dangerous attitude to withhold all support from the general program of a church in which one holds a pastorate. I only mention these things, my good brother, because I know that God and the church need every consecrated soul that sincerely loves Christ

and follows him. The church sometimes needs opposing views, if they are held in love. They stimulate both faith and prayer, and help us to find the Holy Spirit's leading."

Brother Bonsack, with his record for interpreting both sides of an issue fairly, was frequently called on to explain and reconcile. He did not always succeed. To one of his critics he wrote: "It would be a pleasure for me at any time to sit down and talk frankly about this whole matter. I have no desire to defend myself, for 'the mistakes of my life have been many, and the sins of my heart have been more.' But you fail to understand the position of the committee. I still hope I may sometime have such a talk."

Brother Bonsack's advice and counsel were sought by many. One brother wrote: "For some time I have been thinking of somewhere to invest twelve or fifteen thousand dollars in the Church of the Brethren for mission work, and I know of no one better posted than you."

A Virginia church felt that Brother Bonsack could nominate a pastor for them and wrote: "Our pastor is leaving us. The pastoral committee asked me to write to you. Do you know a good man for us who is contemplating a change? You know men and also the brotherhood. We will be glad for some suggestions."

The chairman of a college trustee board wrote, "While it will not be publicly announced until commencement day, we are losing our president. Our committee will be very pleased to have you suggest someone you think would be suitable to fill this position."

A young minister, doing some teaching and some

preaching, wishing counsel from Brother Bonsack, wrote: "You suggest in your letter that I align myself more closely with church work. One of the problems of my life has been whether to enter fully the field of education or the more important sphere, the church. At present, I have the mentally comfortable position of fence sitting—doing a little of each and postponing the day of definite decision. I would be glad to sit down sometime and talk about all these things. I have a very high regard for your experience and your insight and foresight. . . ."

Even when Brother Bonsack had matured in years he was sought for pastoral service. When he was fifty-four the Washington, D. C., church, which he had once served, wrote him: "Now, Brother Bonsack, I am coming direct to my point. WE WANT YOU. We have come to the conclusion that if we are to secure a man who is big enough for this place we must pull him away from some other big job. We realize that you are, in a most efficient manner, filling one of the biggest and most responsible positions in the Brotherhood, but we also believe that the pastorate here is just as big and no less extensive in its influence. We assure you that we shall appreciate you more than when you were with us before and we are confident that you will find greater possibilities than before."

At age seventy-eight he received a letter from an Indiana church which needed special pastoral help. "If it would fit into your plans to spend Sundays and two or three days of the week [here] for several months, or for the rest of the church year, it would be a big help in their situation."

When Brother Bonsack was seventy-three, the chairman of the ministerial committee of the Sebring, Florida, church sent him this telegram: "The Sebring church has no permanent pastor and no prospect. Would it be possible for you and wife to take the work for several months this winter? The parsonage is available and we expect to remunerate you. Would appreciate your coming as soon as possible."

Brother Bonsack was much used as a speaker on tours among churches of a district or a region. When a district felt the need of a new missionary outlook, or some revitalizing inspiration, or the pouring of oil on troubled waters among its churches, the prescription was often a speaking tour by one or more brethren. No one was more often invited for such work than was Brother Bonsack. He could, in a one-day or one-session stop, do much to inspire, establish confidence, lift sights, and give acceptable counsel. He was able to analyze situations, discern the strength and weakness of people, and suggest the way forward. When he was yet secretary of the General Mission Board, he went usually to represent the missionary work of the church. After his retirement as a board secretary, he went on many tours as a general churchman. About 1942 he was sent by arrangement of the board's home mission department to tour a number of the weaker, outlying, or problem districts. His reports on these visits were frank and confidential. By not referring to names and places, we are free to quote some excerpts which illustrate his powers of observation and his frankness in reporting.

In a district meeting, preceding a tour of the churches of one such district, he met with the elders. Referring to the election of officers and delegates, he said, "They took hours of detailed balloting and all the time of the elders' meeting. It was gracious, fair and tedious." A visiting brother had come to this district meeting in the interest of a division. Brother Bonsack writes, "I cautioned the elders against a new district only to afford representation of a weak or opposing purpose." No more was heard of the agitation.

One of the churches he visited had grown to nearly five hundred members. Of the pastor he wrote, "A man like ———, located anywhere there are people, will build a church."

From the next church he wrote, "Two brothers have done much to make possible the new building. They have done this in memory and appreciation of their father." He also spoke of a woman who had inherited much and of her good business-minded husband as together serving humbly and effectively.

At the next church he wrote, "The work was built up in the past ten years but it will not go forward under the present regime. It needs stronger leadership."

In one of the churches the minister's wife held a widely divergent viewpoint on the manner of expressing religious zeal. Of this situation he wrote, "This combination has hindered the work."

Commenting about a district fieldman, he said, "He is not quite as aggressive as he ought to be, but most of

the churches needing some push will accept it only in smaller doses."

At another place he wrote, "The pastor has trouble to organize both his church and his farm work. He has a noble little wife who is much liked. She will work to the nth degree to help him pay his bills."

Brother Bonsack had the ability to come to grips helpfully with ministers about their character traits. He writes of one, "Here Brother ——— holds forth. Claims to be the supreme egotist of the state. If he could work well with others, good would come, but he cannot. I told him I could work with him, though I knew I would have to spank him about every day. He agreed on a reciprocity basis."

Of a small church he wrote, "Whoever works [there] must get along with the elder, who has long lived there, take his counsel, but not too literally."

Brother Bonsack enjoyed rugged health and could undergo a program of irregular hours, "preacher dinners," late-night visits in the homes entertaining him, and speaking to from one to a half-dozen groups per day. He gave himself freely nor counted the cost if he could strengthen the faith and the program of the church.

Philosophy and Humor

Brother Bonsack's philosophy (or may we call it practical wisdom?) grew out of his seeming understanding of the principles of life. Some admirers pointed to him as an example that formal education is not needed. They would say, "Look how well you get along." To this Brother Bonsack would reply, "You don't know how handicapped I feel." He believed in education. He often criticized public educational institutions, saying they prepared people to get jobs rather than to create jobs. His spirit of rugged, personal independence would cause him to speak thus. He did not favor an individualism that would be unco-operative with society. He often said that Protestantism suffered from too much individualism but he wanted men to be more than cogs on a wheel turning in a machine.

His philosophy, which gave him a sense of "in harmony with life" and which people liked, grew out of his Christian faith. He could pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and interpret the Kingdom as one for this life as well as for the life beyond. He understood it not as a kingdom of military and political power but one in which there was the power and authority of God with no place for hate, revenge, greed, racial strife, legalism, and secularism. He believed in a saving and redeeming God. When his friends would ask, "Why doesn't God do something about such an evil and suffering world?" he

would reply, "He did everything when He sent His Son into the world."

He believed in the essential goodness of life. He would say, "Dirt is only matter out of place." If comment were made about boys being unruly he would remark, "A boy is the only animal out of which God can make a man."

He understood the strength and the weakness of people. He liked to remark that a man's strength might be his weakness and his weakness his strength; that strength and weakness were close bedfellows, lying right by each other. Then he would illustrate, saying that a pastor who loved to sit in his study preparing a carefully worded sermon often did it at the expense of his personal contact with people. A mother too exacting about order and cleanliness in the house often failed to make a satisfactory home situation for the children. It might be remarked that Brother Bonsack's great ability in fairness to both sides of an issue sometimes made clear-cut decisions difficult for him, thus making him an illustration of his own viewpoint.

Brother Bonsack was not a socialist in ideology. I can hear him saying, "The socialist point of view says of society, 'You owe me something and I require that you pay me.' " Against this he would say, "The Christian philosophy says, 'I am in debt to you and up to the limit of my ability I propose to pay.' " He believed in challenge and in struggle and he believed, further, that society should make possible the maximum advancement of a person's inherent ability.

He believed in diligence and hard work. He liked to observe merchants in the conduct of their business. He would say, "How well a man succeeds in his store depends on what he does when he is not busy, or when he does not have a customer."

He had implicit faith in what God could do but emphasized man's part. He would quote, "The gospel is free but Christian living is costly," and "Rest in the Lord but do not rust in Him." He liked to tell the story of the minister calling on a member who had converted a weedy, stony, rundown lot into a luxuriant garden. The pastor, wanting to be sure his member acknowledged God's gift, said, "God has given you a very successful garden," to which the member replied, "Yes, but you should have seen what a failure He made of it last year when I didn't help."

His was not a philosophy of despair. He was an optimist. He was no fatalist, saying, "It is to be so." He tried to lift people out of discouragement, for, said he, "A discouraged man kills everything he touches." He was concerned about discouraged pastors, for their discouragement prevented improvement. He encouraged them with his stories. He would tell of riding a Chicago streetcar on a slushy February day, when he heard a passenger remark to the motorman, "It's a nasty day underfoot," to which the motorman, a man after Brother Bonsack's heart, replied, "Yes, but it is wondrous nice above and that's the direction we're going." He liked and often used the quotations: "The bee that gathers

honey from the flower also fertilizes it" and "When it gets too dark the stars come out."

When the Charles E. Zunkel family moved to Elgin, Brother Zunkel's father was with them and was ill. Brother Bonsack visited him, as he was accustomed to doing where there was opportunity. Mr. Zunkel remembers Brother Bonsack's saying to his father, "We don't always understand the meaning of illness but we have to get down sometimes before we can look up."

Paul Noffsinger, referring to his spirit of resourcefulness, tells of Brother Bonsack's visiting in a farm home. The mother asked Johnny to go get the cows. Johnny replied that he was too tired. Then Brother Bonsack suggested that Joe (Johnny's broomstick horse) was not tired, and that he get him to go. Thereupon Johnny, astride Joe, went happily off to the pasture for the cows.

He believed the Christian religion needed to be lived to get value from it. "If your religion is always hidden, very likely it will soon be lost," "The gospel is a great force but in the main an unused one," and "The gospel—let us live it, let us give it" were among his favorite quotations. He could always get his audience to smile by saying, "Salt is that stuff which if you don't put it into mashed potatoes makes them taste bad." John Eller remembers a Student Volunteer conference at Manchester College of which the theme was *How Know the Lord's Will?* Brother Bonsack explained that knowing it in full detail was not necessary for students. They knew that for any service preparation was needed and they

should stay in school. He said, "It is like riding a bicycle—you must keep going or fall off."

In the matter of organization in the operation of missions or in any phase of life he decried overemphasis on it. He seemed to be reaching out for what God would do directly or through the person-to-person contact. He feared that in building organization to accomplish work there was dependence on it rather than on God. Yet he talked much of good administration. One day he pointed out two Elgin stores, the one doing well, the other failing. Said he, "They have equal opportunity; the one has good and the other poor administration." He observed that institutions once started were continued even though the need had been met. He noted that schools, hospitals, and other institutions on mission fields needed to be perpetuated through hard financial times even though other vital and even more important noninstitutional types of work went begging for support.

Brother Bonsack's personal checkbook testified to his faith. He was generous. He believed in supporting the local church; nor did he lag in support of community needs. The mission cause was on his heart and periodically and voluntarily he wrote his mission check, thus practicing what he preached to others.

He never took a vow of poverty. He believed in private ownership. He possessed a home and by saving made a number of moderate investments. His will also testified to his faith. It provided that a portion of his estate be used in the world-wide work of the church.

He observed that selfishness prevented sweetness of

life for many people. One of his sayings was "Giving of your means relieves you of your meanness." He loved to tell the story of Sandy and Ikey, who agreed to visit each other's church. On Saturday Sandy went with Ikey, the Jew, to his synagogue and saw him put ten dollars in the offering. Sandy said, "Do you always give so much?" Ikey replied, "Yes, usually, for my religion is important." On Sunday Ikey went with his Scottish friend to his church. He noted Sandy putting a nickel in the offering plate. After the service, Ikey asked, "Can you get by with giving so little?" Sandy indicated this as his usual amount, to which Ikey replied, "You almost constrain me to become a Christian."

Storytelling was an art with Brother Bonsack. Frequently he used stories to illustrate some truth. Sometimes, however, his stories may have been used to produce a good mood rather than to illustrate a point. His own enjoyment of good stories as well as his use of them can be shown by the following selected from his repertoire.

Samuel Ausherman recalls the story of the merchant who instructed his clerks not to do anything unless it could be supported by Scripture. One day when a transient made a purchase the clerk greatly overcharged him. The merchant demanded an explanation, whereupon the clerk replied, "He was a stranger and I took him in."

A. R. Showalter tells a Bonsack story of the boy who, not liking prunes, was put to bed early one night and told that God would not like him because he left four

in his dish. That night a storm with terrible lightning and thunder caused the mother to peep into her son's room to make sure that he was safe. There she saw him standing with his nose pressed against the windowpane and overheard him say, "What an awful fuss to make over four prunes."

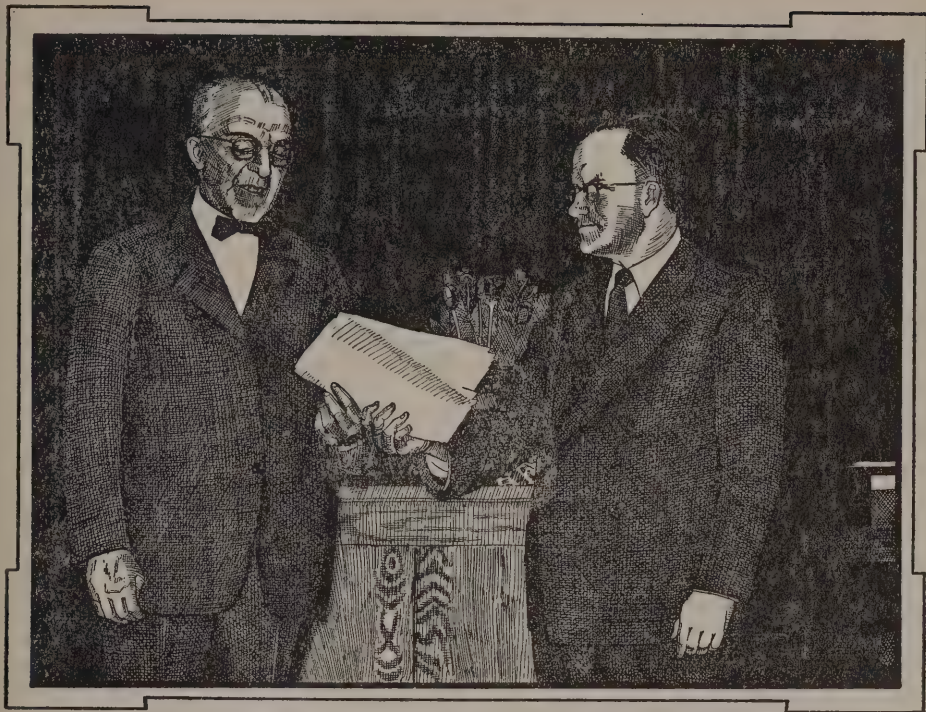
It is said that Jesus as a master teacher used the common things of life as subjects for his parables. Brother Bonsack borrowed from Jesus in this respect. He liked to tell of a persistent and excruciatingly painful condition in his knee. After trying heat, cold, liniment, plasters, salves, and whatnot, his doctor said, "Mr. Bonsack, I don't believe the trouble is in your knee." Brother Bonsack assured him that that was the only place hurting him. The doctor X-rayed his teeth and pulled one; the knee pain left. Brother Bonsack, then, speaking of world trouble, said the pain may show up at one spot on the globe but the source of the trouble may be far on the other side. He would then admonish the church to more faithfulness in missions to relieve the pain in far-distant areas.

After Brother Bonsack returned from his third trip abroad he spoke very frequently about Dr. Holley, an American Negro churchman and educator with whom he had traveled and who was one of the speakers at the missions conference at Leopoldville. Dr. Holley desired to lift the black man above a feeling of racial inferiority and counseled him thus: "Now, you black man, don't be ashamed of your color. When the white man sings, 'Wash me and make me whiter than snow,' you sing,

'Wash me and make me blacker than a crow.'” Brother Bonsack often told this to illustrate the tendency of the white man to label everything good as white and everything bad as black.

While it is impossible to know to what degree Brother Bonsack's alert and wholesome sense of humor contributed to his popularity and acceptability in the circles in which he moved, we can know that it was a valuable asset to him. It was an integral part of his life philosophy and therefore of his personality as seen and evaluated by others.

Other aspects of his personality will be considered in the remaining chapters, told largely in the words of some of those who knew and loved him and who were in turn better persons for having come within the orbit of his uplifting influence.



Sixty Years a Minister

When Brother Bonsack was eighty-two years old he had served sixty years in the ministry. The Elgin church invited him to accept on March 16, 1952, such honor as it could bestow. He preached the morning sermon, taking as his theme *Living in a Changing World*. Letters from fellow workers around the globe were presented, words of appreciation were spoken, and the whole congregation paused to remember him as a good neighbor, a devoted churchman, and a shepherd of souls.

Mrs. Quincy (Kathren) Holsopple, who is a daughter

of Galen B. Royer, former secretary of the General Mission Board, presented a paper, later published in the May 10, 1952, *Gospel Messenger*, from which we quote:

Items culled from the files of the Highland Avenue Messenger, news sheet of the Elgin church, edited by our beloved word artist Adaline Hohf Beery, were revealing. "C. D. Bonsack is another religious tramp (what else could he be if he is in a Forward Movement all the time?). He was at home long enough to collect his thoughts for a good sermon Sunday morning on Having Joy in Religion" (April 1923).

"May 18 was the day for the Conference Offering and the most appropriate person to lay the matter before us was our well-informed secretary, C. D. Bonsack. He said some other fine things, besides alluding to more money" (June 1924).

Mrs. Holsopple indicated that Brother Bonsack did something vital beyond official work.

It is the preaching unawares. It is the lessons taught when not teaching. It is that which radiates from the person and gives meaning to his activities.

There was one question we children in our Elgin home always asked at board meeting time: "Is Brother Bonsack coming?" We children liked him. He saw us when he spoke to us. He talked to us as if we were *people*. He told such interesting things. We became part of the adult group when he visited in our home even though we did have to keep still when the grown folk talked. In turn we became part of this great thing they talked of — the church. Our little bodies did not feel the floor-bed when our hearts were thrilling from being with great men intent on a great task.

Many letters of congratulation came to honor Brother Bonsack on his sixtieth anniversary. In reply to one letter received from his good friends, Jacob and Viola (Hildebrand) Neff, of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, he wrote,

"There's been a lot of flattery floating around here but it won't hurt you if you don't inhale it." Mrs. Neff, speaking of this letter, said, "I'm doubly indebted to Brother Bonsack for his ministry to my husband and my father. When I was sixteen he came into our community for an evangelistic meeting. Jacob, then in his late teens, remembers Brother Bonsack coming into their home and quoting, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' Matthew 6:33, in such a convincing way that he straightway gave his heart to the Lord." Mrs. Neff, in speaking of her father, said, "He had been disfellowshipped from the church for belonging to a union and carrying life insurance, both of which were frowned upon in that day. He felt very bitter toward the church. Brother Bonsack removed the bitterness with his kindness. Made him feel the importance of the church. With his new attitude he went before the church, making such confession as was required and was restored to membership. He lived and died a faithful member of the church."

Desiring that some of the many friends of Brother Bonsack may help in this volume, we quote from a few of the sixtieth-anniversary letters.

"We appreciate the friendship of 'folks' like you."
—Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Arnold, Elgin, Illinois.

"We feel our life is much richer since having had you in our home and listening to your fine talks."—Orval and Kathryn Loxley, Pittsburg, Ohio.

"I am proud to be one of the thousands of friends you have made."—W. Newton Long, Baltimore, Maryland.

"I still remember some of the things you said in a

series of talks thirty years ago at Bridgewater when I was a student there. Such comments registered as, the sister who liked her new dress until one day she saw a colored lady with one just like it, and the Maryland farmer who decided he wanted to give as much for a home over there as he paid in taxes for the privilege of living on his Maryland acres.”—Harper S. Will, South Bend, Indiana.

“May the wisdom which you have inspire every young minister like myself to give himself unstintingly to the complete will of God. You do not know me but I know you and appreciate what you have done for our church.”—Carroll M. Petry, Manchester College.

“Maudie and I feel that we have been richly blessed by being identified with the Bonsack family in the bonds of friendship.”—Jacob Hollinger, Washington, D. C.

“This occasion presents a unique interest to us here, because it was in this locality that you preached your first sermon. Also, your services have been greatly appreciated during times of stress as well as in those moments of high spiritual achievement in this community.”—F. E. Williar, Baltimore, Maryland.

“One always feels like trying to do better when he hears you preach.”—Nora M. Rhodes, Dallas Center, Iowa.

“I can remember of your being ‘a young minister’ when we were in Maryland just before we went to India in 1894.”—Mary E. Stover, Porterville, California.

“Oh, that we had many more with such a splendid record in our Lord’s service.”—A. L. Maust, Garden City, Kansas.

“I remember when you came to Elgin and it was our

good fortune to have you live with us and how happy we were to have your wonderful uplifting influence for our children.”—Lauren and Viola Miller, Alma, Michigan.

“We often remember your helpful letters and your understanding counsel during our years in India. They are still very much a part of our life.”—I. W. and Mabel Moomaw, Madison, New Jersey.

“Since my boyhood days I can recall with abiding interest your valued work in the Blue Ridge area of New Windsor. I have always taken humble pride to have been chosen as your successor as a member of the General Mission Board after 1923 when you became a full-time secretary of the board.”—H. H. Nye, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

“On this occasion I cannot but realize that you have been worthy in the eyes of our Father in Heaven to do service in His name over a period of two generations. This is no small privilege, sir, and I put it in the words of our Rabbis: ‘Happy are the righteous; not enough that they [themselves] achieve virtue [but] they cause others with them to grow in virtue.’ May God’s grace be with you in the future as it was up to this day.”—Rabbi Abraham J. Rose of the Kneseth Israel synagogue of Elgin.

“We send you this simple message, voicing our sincere gratitude to God for your noble and genuine fellowship; and for the great contribution you have made to the Christian cause through these many years.”—Elgin Ministerial Association: Clarence Wittenstrom, president; K. M. Walton, secretary.



The Commoner: Man of Strength

Charles Bonsack's power and influence cannot be easily fathomed. His strength of "more than ten" cannot be explained simply because his heart was pure. Many there be with pure hearts whose influence has not been large.

One day soon after Brother Bonsack's death, as I was shopping in the neighborhood grocery, a clerk said to me, "You have lost a great man in Mr. Bonsack." I asked him, "What made him great?" "Well, he was so friendly," he said. "But many of your customers are friendly," I added. "Tell me what he had that made him such a man." He stammered and made several attempts, then

blurted out, "Well, I declare, I don't know but as I was saying, I just liked to see him come in; he made me feel better."

Dozens of people have extolled the strength and influence of Brother Bonsack but few have been able to put a finger on any single detail and say, "Here it is." He was good, had great faith, had health, came from a good family, was happily married, was trusted much, traveled widely, and held important positions—but many others have also experienced all of these.

W. O. Beckner, an Elgin neighbor of the Bonsacks, in paying tribute to him on the occasion of his sixtieth anniversary in the ministry, raised and answered a question which stands at the very heart of this chapter.

"We ask ourselves the question: 'Why such universal respect for Mr. Bonsack?' Maybe he asks that of himself sometimes. I don't know what his answer is to himself. I do know what others of us think. We have the answer.

"He has a strikingly friendly personal appearance. His face radiates friendliness and goodwill, love and respect. No frown of haughtiness or contempt or hatred for anyone ever furrowed his countenance. He is genuine in his respect for everyone. He knows too that his feet are upon the earth and the value of the Scriptural injunction: 'Beware when all men speak well of you.' That is why his neighbors like him. That is part of our answer.

"Friendliness? Where is one to be found who has more? All doors are open to him. Who has sickness and he does not suffer? Who has sorrow and he is not pained?

Who has success and he does not rejoice? Who has loneliness and he does not comfort? Who has frustrations and he is not grieved? Where there is sickness, his presence is better than a medicine. Where there is sorrow, his coming allays the pain. Where there is rejoicing, his smile sanctifies. Where there is discord, his touch on the strings of the soul's harp brings harmony and peace. "

"Brother Bonsack again is one in a million who extends his friendliness out into the regions of unknown persons. He lives adventurously. He gives first and aggressively of his own nature. He is a career diplomat for the Kingdom of God on earth."

Ralph Bonsack, commenting in a general way on his father's life and character, says: "He managed a college education for his five children, met life's emergencies, stood for something more than passing fancies, lived within his income, and was very charitable always. He was a demonstration of character and ability to live a disciplined life." Well might any man rejoice to have that said truthfully of him!

Join me in delving further than we did in some of the previous chapters into those basic qualities which made him the stalwart Bonsack we knew.

He had great faith but was not a perfectionist. Brother Bonsack firmly believed the doctrines of evangelical Christianity. He believed the plan of salvation in which Christ's death for sinful men brought redemption. He believed in baptism so that men may rise in newness of life. He understood the necessity for suffering. He most certainly believed that the fruit of redemption

should appear in the form of godly and exemplary lives. It did in his.

However, he did not join the perfectionists in demanding pure conduct. He had broad sympathy for a weak brother and for those whose spirituality was not mature. He believed in God's grace as supplying the needed something in many lives. He felt that goodness, even apart from grace, could not be demanded but was a tender plant needing nourishment and cultivation. The frantic desire to attain perfection in the church by expulsion of nonconforming ones hardly had his enthusiastic support. He felt that no grace of spirit could be made into law to be obeyed *or else*. Yet with all this broad-minded charity he personally lived the overcoming, victorious, exemplary life and gave his all to help others experience this great unity with our heavenly Father.

Had Brother Bonsack been a lawyer he would have had more interest in winning men than in winning cases. Had he been an international statesman he would gladly have lost face if that would save men. He was always interested in people. When it came to differing forms of organization in church, in community, or even in political life he had much more concern for the kind of people operating the organization than for the organization itself.

He had soul force. Power of personality gets close to Brother Bonsack's secret. Many friends, unable to put into words their feelings, will readily say that they felt better when they touched him. The power of God was in Christ so that a woman by touching His garment was healed of her infirmity (Luke 8); her strengthened faith

brought healing. In some such manner faith was strengthened for countless people by their fellowship with Brother Bonsack. From a homiletic standpoint Brother Bonsack was not a great preacher. Phillips Brooks, a famed minister, said, "Truth through personality is our description of real preaching. The truth must come really through the person, not merely over his lips." Another explained it this way: "We preach to persuade men, and the secret of persuasion is the impact of soul upon soul." Brother Bonsack loved to preach but he loved more the people to whom he preached. He fulfilled well three essentials of powerful preaching felt by his hearers: he had their interest at heart; he was competent to speak; he was free from the taint of self-seeking.

By conviction and ability he gave illustrations for the truth he set forth. These came from the common things of life and the people could understand them. He had an appeal to any section of the Brotherhood. He did not belong to any area, but to the Brotherhood.

It is said that Christianity in its beginnings did not succeed by its doctrines but by the lives of its disciples. Brother Bonsack must have experienced his power with persons by soul force fully as much as through the gospel he preached. This probably caused him to be an advocate of personal contact. He was an exponent of limited organization and often spoke against the multiplying of machinery in church work. He favored large provision for counseling, advising, and encouraging when such could be done by persons of experience and spiritual maturity. He deplored the shortage of such workers in the church.

He had a nostalgic yearning for the days when adjoining elders would bring their help to bear on troubled spots.

Brother Bonsack had great faith in humanity. He had faith in himself. He felt that if he could just have a good heart-to-heart talk with Premier Stalin of the Soviet Union and share with him the treasures of Christ's spirit, surely a change for the better would come.

He could adjust deep conviction to the reality of life. In Howard Thurman's *Deep Is the Hunger* he tells of two trees. The sturdy oak stands tall, erect, and unbending. It defies the wind. When the storm is past its broken trunk lies in mute testimony of its bold effort to withstand the conflict. The willow tree makes no pretense of standing erect but accommodates itself, and, after the storm which has bent it low, stands erect again.

Brother Bonsack was certainly not like the willow; nor was he defiant like the oak tree. Perhaps it was his manner of asserting his convictions that kept him from being broken. In 1952 Elder Rufus P. Bucher of Quarryville, Pennsylvania, wrote to him: "We have always appreciated these many years your service that you gave to the Brotherhood. Many changes took place in the church in your time. I have always appreciated the way you adapted yourself to the changes and worked right on with the church."

Brother Bonsack was an able exemplar of the gospel of reconciliation. He was often thought of and his services were often sought when a difficult matter of reconciliation was to be attempted, either in the homeland or on the mission field.

Elder James M. Moore, a contemporary, says, "Brother Bonsack has ability to help two groups of people who thought they were miles apart to see how little there was between them. They could see that they had emphasized small differences until they looked big." And one of his close associates said, "He was the best compromiser I know." Then he hastily added, "In helping two sides to get together."

The character of Brother Bonsack is revealed by his letter to the General Mission Board after a difficult personnel problem had failed of hoped-for solution: "Our approach to the home church should be a fair presentation of both sides and the differences of opinion of folks who sincerely try to do their duty but differ in viewpoint. I will not permit anyone to bring false charges against anyone in the mission. We have splendid folks in the mission and while I think they have erred at some points, they want to do the right thing."

Having extolled his genius as a reconciler it is also in place to say that he suffered a number of keen disappointments when the problems did not yield to his patient endeavor.

This spirit of reconciliation which he employed to good advantage in behalf of others was in evidence in his own relationships. He was careful that the feelings and opinions of others should be given respect and consideration. Doubtless his own sincerity in his personal relationships went far in his efforts to effect reconciliation with others.

His ability to get along well with people was

recognized early in his active adult life. In association with A. P. Snader, J. Walter Englar, and John A. Garber he operated the Mt. Olivet fruit orchard near New Windsor. The men divided the responsibility for the work, and because Brother Bonsack was adept in dealing with people he employed and directed the pickers.

During some of the closing years of Brother Bonsack's life, Ora Garber was the teacher of the Bible class in the Elgin church school of which Brother Bonsack was a member. Mr. Garber deeply appreciated the kindly spirit of Brother Bonsack, who, when he did not agree with the teacher, would sometimes call at his home at a later time and talk with him in a kind, helpful way.

A pastor tells of his experience when Brother Bonsack came for a two-week meeting. He said, "Brother Bonsack could differ with me, but smoothly and convincingly tell me how he felt." This pastor spoke of his father, who was very set in his ways. Brother Bonsack acceded to his wish to play games, one of which was called Wahu. Brother Bonsack would relax and play, pleasing the old man. The pastor said, "His sweet personality could take my old, arbitrary father, stroke his long beard, and make him feel kindly toward the church."

Brother Bonsack had an enviable ability to share with other workers in the church what he had learned during his many years of careful thinking, observation, and experience without making them feel that he was trying to tell them what they should or must do in any particular situation. In so doing he inspired confidence in himself as a trustworthy counselor and friend.

One observer made this comment concerning Brother Bonsack in his relations with the pastors in whose churches he held evangelistic meetings: "Few evangelists have done better in leaving pastors with hope and convictions when closing an evangelistic meeting. He was a pastor of pastors."

Ralph W. Schlosser says he is indebted to Charles D. Bonsack. "Brother Charles Bonsack is one of the church fathers to whom I have always looked for counsel and inspiration. His sermons and addresses in our local churches, at our district meetings and at our Annual Conferences helped to shape my views of what it means to be a Christian. Life has taken on a richer significance because of his touch on my life."

Eva Bowman remembers the days when her husband, Rufus Bowman, as president of Bethany Biblical Seminary received help from Brother Bonsack. "Rufus sought his counsel and valued it highly. I well remember sitting with them and listening to their conversation on deep matters pertaining to the church."

Clyde M. Culp, who was the treasurer of the General Mission Board during the years of Brother Bonsack's secretaryship, has written the following, which well expresses what others who have been associated with Brother Bonsack in the central offices of the church have felt: "The whole period was marked by rough going in my work as treasurer, because of the farm depression of the 1920's, followed by a national industrial depression of the 1930's. During these years there were many times when Secretary Bonsack strode into my office and with

a beaming face and cheerful words seemed to give a lift to one's spirit that made it much easier to carry on. He brought into my work much out of a longer and much richer experience in his relations with the public. I am sure all three of us younger men, Secretaries Zigler, Minnich, and myself, so long together associated with Secretary Bonsack, agree that he was always the perfect stand-in for the Big Brother."

Vital though all of these characteristics were in making Charles Bonsack a widely and deeply beloved and a highly useful man, it is probable that the one characteristic which impressed people more than any other single one was his genuine friendliness. Some lines from Kipling's poem, *If*, suggest in prospect what Brother Bonsack achieved in reality:

"If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,

Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch, . . ."

He met men of high rank with ease and grace; he was widely respected in non-Brethren as well as in Brethren circles. But all this did not make him a man aloof from other men. He was and remained a man of the common people. And the common people recognized this fact, loving him the more because of it.

"Do you know my hobby?" said Brother Bonsack to Mrs. Charles E. Zunkel one day. "It's people." Most men have some hobby, be it fishing or photography, and women something between button collecting and flower raising. Brother Bonsack's interest was not centered in anything material, but in human beings. Thinking back over my close association with him I cannot recall any-

thing ever being more important to him than people.

He lives in the minds of many people because he took an interest in them. Many whose lives have been happier and richer because of his personal interest and helpfulness have paid tribute to him by letter or verbally before and since his passing. What they have said is well worth recording.

When Robert Wenger of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, was asked why everybody liked Brother Bonsack he replied, "Because Brother Bonsack liked everybody."

"I am happy indeed that Brother Bonsack is to be put into a book. After a long service career he rounded out his life as the friendly evangelist and the elder church statesman," writes Harry A. Brandt, who served in the *Gospel Messenger* editorial office during a large part of Brother Bonsack's secretaryship.

Edward Frantz, former editor of the *Gospel Messenger*, writes, "Being next-door neighbor to Brother Bonsack and his fine family for twenty-five years made me know him very intimately. He wanted to be on good terms with everybody he knew and he wanted to know the inside of everybody he met. His back-slapping friendliness to all was his outstanding characteristic. He always came over to our house to share experiences on his return from his evangelistic meetings, to which he gave his time after retirement from the office. We note that he went to poor, weak churches, not merely to the strong and wealthy places."

I. N. Garber, whose lot in Elgin corners the Bonsack lot, tells of Brother Bonsack stopping when going by, so

different from the ordinary interest and practice of most people.

E. Paul Weaver of Mexico, Indiana, a former missionary to Nigeria, says that Brother Bonsack always called him by name and made him feel his personal worth and not merely like "one of the missionaries."

Dr. Vernon Kinzie speaks of him as a man of kindness and goodwill. Mrs. Kinzie relates that as a Manchester College student she cooked in the home of the late President Winger, and that Brother Bonsack loved to stop there and eat the biscuits she baked.

Mildred Williams Baker, daughter of J. H. B. Williams, remembers his coming into their home and that as a little girl she loved to crawl up on his lap and pull his whiskers.

One day after Brother Bonsack's death, Reverend and Mrs. W. W. Cox of Girard, Illinois, came to Elgin. Mrs. Cox, who is the daughter of H. C. Early, the officiating minister at the Bonsacks' wedding, said, "Our regret in coming to Elgin is that we can't shake his hand. Our son in past years would say that miles didn't count if Brother Bonsack were within driving distance."

While in his evangelistic meetings Brother Bonsack had a considerable degree of success in bringing people to their first public commitments, he also did much for the members of the churches. Nora Rhodes states that he was invited to hold a second meeting at Dallas Center, Iowa, not because he was an especially outstanding evangelist but because everybody loved him. "He was a commoner," she says.

Mrs. J. H. Hollinger writes concerning Brother Bonsack's work in the church in Washington, D. C.: "I know our church was like one big family then and he was like a father to all of us. His visits into our homes were a great joy. He was a real shepherd to his sheep. His words of wisdom and comfort were most helpful."

Brother Bonsack was loved and held in high esteem not only by members of his family but by people in the old home community. Lavinia Roop Wenger writes: "The life of Brother Charles D. Bonsack is the story of a great soul who has given long years of service to the building of Christ's kingdom on earth. The Meadow Branch congregation of Westminster, Maryland, takes courage from the fact that so great a soul has come out of this 'Nazareth.' When difficulties arose in the home congregation or the home district, Brother Bonsack was called home again because the people here felt confident that when he served on the committee there would be the least hurt and the greatest good accomplished. In matters of church organization some machinery is necessary but he always kept the worth of the individual soul first. He loved people and had faith in the common man who through Christian living will carry forward the church of Christ at home and abroad."

He enjoyed visiting in the homes of his friends, and he was always a welcome visitor. Even the children in the homes in which he visited were happy to have him call, and he always had something of interest and help to say to them. To him they were individuals, not just children. The aged and the sick, and those in sorrow,

were all the recipients of his kindly and loving attention. And even when he himself was ill, one calling on him probably gained more than he gave. Mrs. Arthur Baldwin tells that her husband visited Brother Bonsack in Bethany Hospital after he had had major surgery; she says that although her husband went to cheer Brother Bonsack she suspected that he himself received the greater amount of that better feeling.

In connection with Brother Bonsack's ability to sense what was the right and helpful thing to say in a given circumstance, Clyde M. Culp says: "My first acquaintance with Secretary Bonsack was in the early years of this century when he conducted 'protracted meetings' in my Indiana home congregation. The occasion that stamped my measure of the man was a brief interlude in those meetings when memorial services were held for a young friend and popular member of the congregation who had died and been buried in California. Brother Bonsack's remarks included a quotation from Gray's *Elegy* and he gave the same so impressively that it brought consolation to all. It showed his capacity for saying the right words at the right time."

"He built the brotherhood, not by the number of sermons or converts but by the morale and the spirit of brotherhood among the people. He could encompass the whole of what all the Brethren were and did. When churches were concerned about who should be admitted to their pulpits, Charles Bonsack was admitted. He could think with the people, adjust his hat or coat to respect the feelings of the people whom he served. Was he a hypocrite?

Some doubted, but after feeling his spirit they had faith and trusted his sincerity." Thus writes one whose identity has been lost.

The Word tells us that Jesus was a social being, easily comfortable with all ages and with people of any social status, and that he ate with sinners. Brother Bonsack likewise was not a stranger in any situation, whether he was playing with young people in camp, riding with strangers on a train, or meeting with the elders of the church on difficult problems. He was always recognized as a churchman sharing something of value. But he was also recognized as a commoner, loving and sharing with the common people.

Many others have made comments which reflect their appreciation of the many sterling qualities which made Charles Bonsack the man he was and the useful servant of the Kingdom which he was widely recognized to be. But we must be content to quote only one more of those made by his closest friends. J. J. Yoder of McPherson, Kansas, who was for thirty-three years a member of the General Mission Board and who made a world missionary tour with Brother Bonsack, concisely says what all of Brother Bonsack's friends have felt: "I loved him and wish I had the ability to say the good words about him that he deserves."

Although Brother Bonsack was not privileged to secure long years of academic schooling, he was honored by Juniata College in 1936 with a Doctor of Divinity degree. The president of the college was Charles C. Ellis, a trusted church leader who worked before and after 1936

good fortune to have you live with us and how happy we were to have your wonderful uplifting influence for our children.”—Lauren and Viola Miller, Alma, Michigan.

“We often remember your helpful letters and your understanding counsel during our years in India. They are still very much a part of our life.”—I. W. and Mabel Moomaw, Madison, New Jersey.

“Since my boyhood days I can recall with abiding interest your valued work in the Blue Ridge area of New Windsor. I have always taken humble pride to have been chosen as your successor as a member of the General Mission Board after 1923 when you became a full-time secretary of the board.”—H. H. Nye, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

“On this occasion I cannot but realize that you have been worthy in the eyes of our Father in Heaven to do service in His name over a period of two generations. This is no small privilege, sir, and I put it in the words of our Rabbis: ‘Happy are the righteous; not enough that they [themselves] achieve virtue [but] they cause others with them to grow in virtue.’ May God’s grace be with you in the future as it was up to this day.”—Rabbi Abraham J. Rose of the Kneseth Israel synagogue of Elgin.

“We send you this simple message, voicing our sincere gratitude to God for your noble and genuine fellowship; and for the great contribution you have made to the Christian cause through these many years.”—Elgin Ministerial Association: Clarence Wittenstrom, president; K. M. Walton, secretary.



The Commoner: Man of Strength

Charles Bonsack's power and influence cannot be easily fathomed. His strength of "more than ten" cannot be explained simply because his heart was pure. Many there be with pure hearts whose influence has not been large.

One day soon after Brother Bonsack's death, as I was shopping in the neighborhood grocery, a clerk said to me, "You have lost a great man in Mr. Bonsack." I asked him, "What made him great?" "Well, he was so friendly," he said. "But many of your customers are friendly," I added. "Tell me what he had that made him such a man." He stammered and made several attempts, then

blurted out, "Well, I declare, I don't know but as I was saying, I just liked to see him come in; he made me feel better."

Dozens of people have extolled the strength and influence of Brother Bonsack but few have been able to put a finger on any single detail and say, "Here it is." He was good, had great faith, had health, came from a good family, was happily married, was trusted much, traveled widely, and held important positions—but many others have also experienced all of these.

W. O. Beckner, an Elgin neighbor of the Bonsacks, in paying tribute to him on the occasion of his sixtieth anniversary in the ministry, raised and answered a question which stands at the very heart of this chapter.

"We ask ourselves the question: 'Why such universal respect for Mr. Bonsack?' Maybe he asks that of himself sometimes. I don't know what his answer is to himself. I do know what others of us think. We have the answer.

"He has a strikingly friendly personal appearance. His face radiates friendliness and goodwill, love and respect. No frown of haughtiness or contempt or hatred for anyone ever furrowed his countenance. He is genuine in his respect for everyone. He knows too that his feet are upon the earth and the value of the Scriptural injunction: 'Beware when all men speak well of you.' That is why his neighbors like him. That is part of our answer.

"Friendliness? Where is one to be found who has more? All doors are open to him. Who has sickness and he does not suffer? Who has sorrow and he is not pained?

Who has success and he does not rejoice? Who has loneliness and he does not comfort? Who has frustrations and he is not grieved? Where there is sickness, his presence is better than a medicine. Where there is sorrow, his coming allays the pain. Where there is rejoicing, his smile sanctifies. Where there is discord, his touch on the strings of the soul's harp brings harmony and peace.

"Brother Bonsack again is one in a million who extends his friendliness out into the regions of unknown persons. He lives adventurously. He gives first and aggressively of his own nature. He is a career diplomat for the Kingdom of God on earth."

Ralph Bonsack, commenting in a general way on his father's life and character, says: "He managed a college education for his five children, met life's emergencies, stood for something more than passing fancies, lived within his income, and was very charitable always. He was a demonstration of character and ability to live a disciplined life." Well might any man rejoice to have that said truthfully of him!

Join me in delving further than we did in some of the previous chapters into those basic qualities which made him the stalwart Bonsack we knew.

He had great faith but was not a perfectionist. Brother Bonsack firmly believed the doctrines of evangelical Christianity. He believed the plan of salvation in which Christ's death for sinful men brought redemption. He believed in baptism so that men may rise in newness of life. He understood the necessity for suffering. He most certainly believed that the fruit of redemption

should appear in the form of godly and exemplary lives. It did in his.

However, he did not join the perfectionists in demanding pure conduct. He had broad sympathy for a weak brother and for those whose spirituality was not mature. He believed in God's grace as supplying the needed something in many lives. He felt that goodness, even apart from grace, could not be demanded but was a tender plant needing nourishment and cultivation. The frantic desire to attain perfection in the church by expulsion of nonconforming ones hardly had his enthusiastic support. He felt that no grace of spirit could be made into law to be obeyed *or else*. Yet with all this broad-minded charity he personally lived the overcoming, victorious, exemplary life and gave his all to help others experience this great unity with our heavenly Father.

Had Brother Bonsack been a lawyer he would have had more interest in winning men than in winning cases. Had he been an international statesman he would gladly have lost face if that would save men. He was always interested in people. When it came to differing forms of organization in church, in community, or even in political life he had much more concern for the kind of people operating the organization than for the organization itself.

He had soul force. Power of personality gets close to Brother Bonsack's secret. Many friends, unable to put into words their feelings, will readily say that they felt better when they touched him. The power of God was in Christ so that a woman by touching His garment was healed of her infirmity (Luke 8); her strengthened faith

brought healing. In some such manner faith was strengthened for countless people by their fellowship with Brother Bonsack. From a homiletic standpoint Brother Bonsack was not a great preacher. Phillips Brooks, a famed minister, said, "Truth through personality is our description of real preaching. The truth must come really through the person, not merely over his lips." Another explained it this way: "We preach to persuade men, and the secret of persuasion is the impact of soul upon soul." Brother Bonsack loved to preach but he loved more the people to whom he preached. He fulfilled well three essentials of powerful preaching felt by his hearers: he had their interest at heart; he was competent to speak; he was free from the taint of self-seeking.

By conviction and ability he gave illustrations for the truth he set forth. These came from the common things of life and the people could understand them. He had an appeal to any section of the Brotherhood. He did not belong to any area, but to the Brotherhood.

It is said that Christianity in its beginnings did not succeed by its doctrines but by the lives of its disciples. Brother Bonsack must have experienced his power with persons by soul force fully as much as through the gospel he preached. This probably caused him to be an advocate of personal contact. He was an exponent of limited organization and often spoke against the multiplying of machinery in church work. He favored large provision for counseling, advising, and encouraging when such could be done by persons of experience and spiritual maturity. He deplored the shortage of such workers in the church.

He had a nostalgic yearning for the days when adjoining elders would bring their help to bear on troubled spots.

Brother Bonsack had great faith in humanity. He had faith in himself. He felt that if he could just have a good heart-to-heart talk with Premier Stalin of the Soviet Union and share with him the treasures of Christ's spirit, surely a change for the better would come.

He could adjust deep conviction to the reality of life. In Howard Thurman's *Deep Is the Hunger* he tells of two trees. The sturdy oak stands tall, erect, and unbending. It defies the wind. When the storm is past its broken trunk lies in mute testimony of its bold effort to withstand the conflict. The willow tree makes no pretense of standing erect but accommodates itself, and, after the storm which has bent it low, stands erect again.

Brother Bonsack was certainly not like the willow; nor was he defiant like the oak tree. Perhaps it was his manner of asserting his convictions that kept him from being broken. In 1952 Elder Rufus P. Bucher of Quarryville, Pennsylvania, wrote to him: "We have always appreciated these many years your service that you gave to the Brotherhood. Many changes took place in the church in your time. I have always appreciated the way you adapted yourself to the changes and worked right on with the church."

Brother Bonsack was an able exemplar of the gospel of reconciliation. He was often thought of and his services were often sought when a difficult matter of reconciliation was to be attempted, either in the homeland or on the mission field.

Elder James M. Moore, a contemporary, says, "Brother Bonsack has ability to help two groups of people who thought they were miles apart to see how little there was between them. They could see that they had emphasized small differences until they looked big." And one of his close associates said, "He was the best compromiser I know." Then he hastily added, "In helping two sides to get together."

The character of Brother Bonsack is revealed by his letter to the General Mission Board after a difficult personnel problem had failed of hoped-for solution: "Our approach to the home church should be a fair presentation of both sides and the differences of opinion of folks who sincerely try to do their duty but differ in viewpoint. I will not permit anyone to bring false charges against anyone in the mission. We have splendid folks in the mission and while I think they have erred at some points, they want to do the right thing."

Having extolled his genius as a reconciler it is also in place to say that he suffered a number of keen disappointments when the problems did not yield to his patient endeavor.

This spirit of reconciliation which he employed to good advantage in behalf of others was in evidence in his own relationships. He was careful that the feelings and opinions of others should be given respect and consideration. Doubtless his own sincerity in his personal relationships went far in his efforts to effect reconciliation with others.

His ability to get along well with people was

recognized early in his active adult life. In association with A. P. Snader, J. Walter Englar, and John A. Garber he operated the Mt. Olivet fruit orchard near New Windsor. The men divided the responsibility for the work, and because Brother Bonsack was adept in dealing with people he employed and directed the pickers.

During some of the closing years of Brother Bonsack's life, Ora Garber was the teacher of the Bible class in the Elgin church school of which Brother Bonsack was a member. Mr. Garber deeply appreciated the kindly spirit of Brother Bonsack, who, when he did not agree with the teacher, would sometimes call at his home at a later time and talk with him in a kind, helpful way.

A pastor tells of his experience when Brother Bonsack came for a two-week meeting. He said, "Brother Bonsack could differ with me, but smoothly and convincingly tell me how he felt." This pastor spoke of his father, who was very set in his ways. Brother Bonsack acceded to his wish to play games, one of which was called Wahu. Brother Bonsack would relax and play, pleasing the old man. The pastor said, "His sweet personality could take my old, arbitrary father, stroke his long beard, and make him feel kindly toward the church."

Brother Bonsack had an enviable ability to share with other workers in the church what he had learned during his many years of careful thinking, observation, and experience without making them feel that he was trying to tell them what they should or must do in any particular situation. In so doing he inspired confidence in himself as a trustworthy counselor and friend.

One observer made this comment concerning Brother Bonsack in his relations with the pastors in whose churches he held evangelistic meetings: "Few evangelists have done better in leaving pastors with hope and convictions when closing an evangelistic meeting. He was a pastor of pastors."

Ralph W. Schlosser says he is indebted to Charles D. Bonsack. "Brother Charles Bonsack is one of the church fathers to whom I have always looked for counsel and inspiration. His sermons and addresses in our local churches, at our district meetings and at our Annual Conferences helped to shape my views of what it means to be a Christian. Life has taken on a richer significance because of his touch on my life."

Eva Bowman remembers the days when her husband, Rufus Bowman, as president of Bethany Biblical Seminary received help from Brother Bonsack. "Rufus sought his counsel and valued it highly. I well remember sitting with them and listening to their conversation on deep matters pertaining to the church."

Clyde M. Culp, who was the treasurer of the General Mission Board during the years of Brother Bonsack's secretaryship, has written the following, which well expresses what others who have been associated with Brother Bonsack in the central offices of the church have felt: "The whole period was marked by rough going in my work as treasurer, because of the farm depression of the 1920's, followed by a national industrial depression of the 1930's. During these years there were many times when Secretary Bonsack strode into my office and with

a beaming face and cheerful words seemed to give a lift to one's spirit that made it much easier to carry on. He brought into my work much out of a longer and much richer experience in his relations with the public. I am sure all three of us younger men, Secretaries Zigler, Minnich, and myself, so long together associated with Secretary Bonsack, agree that he was always the perfect stand-in for the Big Brother."

Vital though all of these characteristics were in making Charles Bonsack a widely and deeply beloved and a highly useful man, it is probable that the one characteristic which impressed people more than any other single one was his genuine friendliness. Some lines from Kipling's poem, *If*, suggest in prospect what Brother Bonsack achieved in reality:

"If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,

Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch, . . ."

He met men of high rank with ease and grace; he was widely respected in non-Brethren as well as in Brethren circles. But all this did not make him a man aloof from other men. He was and remained a man of the common people. And the common people recognized this fact, loving him the more because of it.

"Do you know my hobby?" said Brother Bonsack to Mrs. Charles E. Zunkel one day. "It's people." Most men have some hobby, be it fishing or photography, and women something between button collecting and flower raising. Brother Bonsack's interest was not centered in anything material, but in human beings. Thinking back over my close association with him I cannot recall any-

thing ever being more important to him than people.

He lives in the minds of many people because he took an interest in them. Many whose lives have been happier and richer because of his personal interest and helpfulness have paid tribute to him by letter or verbally before and since his passing. What they have said is well worth recording.

When Robert Wenger of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, was asked why everybody liked Brother Bonsack he replied, "Because Brother Bonsack liked everybody."

"I am happy indeed that Brother Bonsack is to be put into a book. After a long service career he rounded out his life as the friendly evangelist and the elder church statesman," writes Harry A. Brandt, who served in the *Gospel Messenger* editorial office during a large part of Brother Bonsack's secretaryship.

Edward Frantz, former editor of the *Gospel Messenger*, writes, "Being next-door neighbor to Brother Bonsack and his fine family for twenty-five years made me know him very intimately. He wanted to be on good terms with everybody he knew and he wanted to know the inside of everybody he met. His back-slapping friendliness to all was his outstanding characteristic. He always came over to our house to share experiences on his return from his evangelistic meetings, to which he gave his time after retirement from the office. We note that he went to poor, weak churches, not merely to the strong and wealthy places."

I. N. Garber, whose lot in Elgin corners the Bonsack lot, tells of Brother Bonsack stopping when going by, so

different from the ordinary interest and practice of most people.

E. Paul Weaver of Mexico, Indiana, a former missionary to Nigeria, says that Brother Bonsack always called him by name and made him feel his personal worth and not merely like "one of the missionaries."

Dr. Vernon Kinzie speaks of him as a man of kindness and goodwill. Mrs. Kinzie relates that as a Manchester College student she cooked in the home of the late President Winger, and that Brother Bonsack loved to stop there and eat the biscuits she baked.

Mildred Williams Baker, daughter of J. H. B. Williams, remembers his coming into their home and that as a little girl she loved to crawl up on his lap and pull his whiskers.

One day after Brother Bonsack's death, Reverend and Mrs. W. W. Cox of Girard, Illinois, came to Elgin. Mrs. Cox, who is the daughter of H. C. Early, the officiating minister at the Bonsacks' wedding, said, "Our regret in coming to Elgin is that we can't shake his hand. Our son in past years would say that miles didn't count if Brother Bonsack were within driving distance."

While in his evangelistic meetings Brother Bonsack had a considerable degree of success in bringing people to their first public commitments, he also did much for the members of the churches. Nora Rhodes states that he was invited to hold a second meeting at Dallas Center, Iowa, not because he was an especially outstanding evangelist but because everybody loved him. "He was a commoner," she says.

Mrs. J. H. Hollinger writes concerning Brother Bonsack's work in the church in Washington, D. C.: "I know our church was like one big family then and he was like a father to all of us. His visits into our homes were a great joy. He was a real shepherd to his sheep. His words of wisdom and comfort were most helpful."

Brother Bonsack was loved and held in high esteem not only by members of his family but by people in the old home community. Lavinia Roop Wenger writes: "The life of Brother Charles D. Bonsack is the story of a great soul who has given long years of service to the building of Christ's kingdom on earth. The Meadow Branch congregation of Westminster, Maryland, takes courage from the fact that so great a soul has come out of this 'Nazareth.' When difficulties arose in the home congregation or the home district, Brother Bonsack was called home again because the people here felt confident that when he served on the committee there would be the least hurt and the greatest good accomplished. In matters of church organization some machinery is necessary but he always kept the worth of the individual soul first. He loved people and had faith in the common man who through Christian living will carry forward the church of Christ at home and abroad."

He enjoyed visiting in the homes of his friends, and he was always a welcome visitor. Even the children in the homes in which he visited were happy to have him call, and he always had something of interest and help to say to them. To him they were individuals, not just children. The aged and the sick, and those in sorrow,

were all the recipients of his kindly and loving attention. And even when he himself was ill, one calling on him probably gained more than he gave. Mrs. Arthur Baldwin tells that her husband visited Brother Bonsack in Bethany Hospital after he had had major surgery; she says that although her husband went to cheer Brother Bonsack she suspected that he himself received the greater amount of that better feeling.

In connection with Brother Bonsack's ability to sense what was the right and helpful thing to say in a given circumstance, Clyde M. Culp says: "My first acquaintance with Secretary Bonsack was in the early years of this century when he conducted 'protracted meetings' in my Indiana home congregation. The occasion that stamped my measure of the man was a brief interlude in those meetings when memorial services were held for a young friend and popular member of the congregation who had died and been buried in California. Brother Bonsack's remarks included a quotation from Gray's *Elegy* and he gave the same so impressively that it brought consolation to all. It showed his capacity for saying the right words at the right time."

"He built the brotherhood, not by the number of sermons or converts but by the morale and the spirit of brotherhood among the people. He could encompass the whole of what all the Brethren were and did. When churches were concerned about who should be admitted to their pulpits, Charles Bonsack was admitted. He could think with the people, adjust his hat or coat to respect the feelings of the people whom he served. Was he a hypocrite?

Some doubted, but after feeling his spirit they had faith and trusted his sincerity." Thus writes one whose identity has been lost.

The Word tells us that Jesus was a social being, easily comfortable with all ages and with people of any social status, and that he ate with sinners. Brother Bonsack likewise was not a stranger in any situation, whether he was playing with young people in camp, riding with strangers on a train, or meeting with the elders of the church on difficult problems. He was always recognized as a churchman sharing something of value. But he was also recognized as a commoner, loving and sharing with the common people.

Many others have made comments which reflect their appreciation of the many sterling qualities which made Charles Bonsack the man he was and the useful servant of the Kingdom which he was widely recognized to be. But we must be content to quote only one more of those made by his closest friends. J. J. Yoder of McPherson, Kansas, who was for thirty-three years a member of the General Mission Board and who made a world missionary tour with Brother Bonsack, concisely says what all of Brother Bonsack's friends have felt: "I loved him and wish I had the ability to say the good words about him that he deserves."

Although Brother Bonsack was not privileged to secure long years of academic schooling, he was honored by Juniata College in 1936 with a Doctor of Divinity degree. The president of the college was Charles C. Ellis, a trusted church leader who worked before and after 1936

with Brother Bonsack on boards and special committees. Calvert Ellis, his son, has made available the copy of the citation, which was prepared by the late I. Harvey Brumbaugh:

Charles Daniel Bonsack, elected to the ministry of the Church in the Meadow Branch Congregation, Maryland, in 1892; early identified with the educational work of the Church of the Brethren as Teacher of Bible, and later as Vice-President and Business Manager of Blue Ridge College; a country preacher and a city pastor; General Director, Forward Movement of the Church of the Brethren; a member of the General Mission Board and since 1921 General Secretary of the Board; twice around-the-world traveller as visitor to the mission fields of India, China, and Africa; author "Sharing Observations With the Home Church"—a volume reciting his keen observations and interpretations of Christian missions, written in a clear and entertaining style. A faithful servant of his Master and steadfast promoter of the Forward Movements of the Church. A man of consecrated common sense, wide intelligence and deep insight. Because of his varied abilities and because of his marked services to the Christian Church, I present him, Mr. President, that he may receive from you the honorary degree of DOCTOR OF DIVINITY.

The high regard in which Brother Bonsack was held within his chosen Christian fellowship was equaled by that of other Christian groups with whom he had the common neighborhood and community contacts. He was an often-invited and welcome guest preacher in the churches of the Elgin community, and he rendered many types of service in the co-operative work of the Elgin churches. In 1938 a member of the First Baptist church of Elgin wrote a poem in appreciation of a series of discussions on missions which Brother Bonsack had led

in that church. We have lifted some lines from this poem to bear the tribute not only of the Baptists but of all denominations.

“This man so brave, so wise, so kind,
On many ‘sects’ does call,
For ‘Brethren’ means to his fair mind
Denominations all.”

”

Excerpts From Memorial Addresses

BROTHER B.

A condensation of remarks by Leland S. Brubaker at the memorial service held at the Norris funeral home, Elgin, Illinois, on February 7, 1953

It is a real privilege to join with you this afternoon in this memorial service for Brother Charles D. Bonsack. To some of us he was known as Brother B. To all of you he was known as a great soul.

Brother B. had an everyday philosophy which was both gracious and challenging. It was what we would call down-to-earth. When I started to attend the meetings of the Foreign Missions Conference in New York, the members of that conference told me how much they appreciated the times when Brother B. led them in their devotions.

I remember an illustration which he so often used. He told how to get rid of a mudhole. You would not scrape out the mud, said he, for in due time it would be just that much deeper and muddier, but you should fill the hole with good clay or with sand. Then the mudhole would be gone forever. Many sought his counsel, young and old alike. He was loved for his down-to-earth faith by missionaries, pastors, and general church members.

Because of this gracious philosophy he lived a vigorous life. One day when we were approaching the harbor at Hong Kong after having been interior to visit

our mission work at On Fun, we were called early by the cabin boy so that we could be ready to get off the boat when it docked. We, being the only foreigners on the Chinese ship, had been given some fresh hand towels. The name of the ship in Chinese characters had been printed on each towel, but unbeknown to us the ink was not yet dry. After Brother B. had washed his face, beard, and hair vigorously, as he always did, he dried "as vigorously as he had washed. Then he discovered that there was some smeared ink on the towel. He turned to me and asked if his face was black. Really, he looked as if he was getting ready for a minstrel show. Here was a man who lived as he preached—vigorously.

Brother B. had a faith that devoutly believed in life eternal but also in life abundant here. He made our faith stronger, both in the now and in the hereafter. He perhaps ministered to more churches in the Church of the Brethren than any other man. For over twenty years he was the secretary of the General Mission Board. Following retirement from that work he spent all of his time touring the churches in the Brotherhood and sharing with them this faith. In December of 1951 he had been in the ministry for sixty years. This long-time service in the ministry was a ministry of love and devotion.

Brother B. was a Christian. That is the best way to describe him. His life is a benediction to us all. This is the crowning event of his earthly life. I can imagine him now, renewing old acquaintances and having a great time visiting with his former friends. Surely he has heard the words which mean so much to everyone who has served

well his Lord and Master: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

A MAN SENT FROM GOD

A summary of the address given by Paul M. Robinson at the memorial service held in the Westminster church, Westminster, Maryland, on February 8, 1953

"There was a man sent from God." These words were first written of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. But certainly, without any irreverence, they may most appropriately be spoken today of our brother whose memory we have come to honor. From the early days of his life, he felt the call to Christian service. God had laid His hand upon him in a unique way, for truly he was sent into the world with a great sense of mission. What a wide range of Christian service he experienced in his fruitful ministry — farmer-preacher, pastor, teacher, college president, missions secretary, world traveler, and Christian statesman. As secretary of the General Mission Board for more than twenty years he challenged many young people of the church with the glorious opportunity of witnessing for Christ abroad. Today, in many lands, his voice is still heard through those who were inspired by him to devote their lives to foreign missions, and his spirit lives on in the countless numbers of lives whom he has blessed. He was not only one of the best known men in the Church of the Brethren in his generation, but one of the most beloved. Surely, here was a man sent from God!

A SON OF CONSOLATION

Acts 4: 36-37; 11: 10-26

Excerpts from a chapel address by William M. Beahm at Bethany Biblical Seminary, Chicago, soon after the passing of Brother Bonsack

I wish to have us look for a while at the character and significance of that large-framed and big-hearted early Christian from Cyprus—Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of Exhortation or Son of Consolation).

According to Floyd Filson's account in *Pioneers of the Primitive Church*, no character in the New Testament is more attractive than Barnabas. He played a lesser role than others he worked with. He was neither one of the twelve nor so outstanding a leader as Paul. But among the leaders of the early church none does more than he to make Christianity a credible and winsome faith. The reasons for this are familiar.

In the first place he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. His influence and effectiveness, his leadership and status stemmed first not from the offices he held nor even from the work he did but from the kind of man he was. Men were drawn to him or sought him out for assignments because of the nature of his soul and his attractive personality. He was a good man. How much we need such people today! We hear of clever men, able men, forceful men, strong men, successful men. It is much more seldom we see or notice a man of sheer transparent goodness. But when we do see one we are

rebuked for our shoddy substitutes for goodness and led to thank God for such a great gift of God—a good man.

In the second place he was a man of generosity and good works. In the needy and critical days in the early Jerusalem church he sold his farm in Cyprus and laid the money at the disciples' feet. Others did the same and a recurrent stream of relief funds went up to the Jerusalem church from all over the growing Christian world. Of these many none received more notice than Barnabas. This may have been because of the size or nature of his gift—a whole farm turned into cash. It appears it was beyond these, the generous spirit and hearty joy which accompanied his gift.

In the third place Barnabas was a great winner of men. He was glad, joyous, and sincere and was given to persuasive exhortation which led much people to Christianity. Both on his own and later with Paul, Barnabas was an effective exhorter and evangelist. This gift of winning men showed up most clearly in his own power in discovering and promoting leaders. The outstanding example was Paul. According to Sholem Asch's *The Apostle* it was Barnabas' faithfulness and unself-regarding love that had much to do with Paul's conversion in the first place. The Scripture makes it clear that after his conversion Barnabas did much to get Paul going. He introduced him to the Jerusalem church after his conversion and allayed their fear by his faith. At Antioch he went after Paul in Tarsus and had much to do in helping to launch his missionary career.

Barnabas also believed in his kinsman, John Mark.

Even when Paul rejected Mark, Barnabas held on and believed in him. He was rewarded later to see Paul himself trusting Mark at last and using him.

The major area of Barnabas' worth and that which perhaps won him the name, Son of Consolation, was his big-hearted ministry in bridging the gap between parties within the church. His special concern was to avoid the threatened rift between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Here his reconciling spirit was clearly felt.

Now the work of reconciliation is beset by many perils. There is the peril of misunderstanding. The reconciler is vulnerable to attacks of both sides. Each side will suspect him because he defends the other one. There is also the peril of compromise whereby one's deep loyalty to both sides blurs out the real issues at stake. Barnabas slipped here. When Paul had to withstand Peter to the face on prejudice against Gentiles, even Barnabas was led astray by his deep loyalty to the Jewish Christians.

But despite these perils in the work of conciliation, the church can't hang together unless there are these absorbent and conciliatory members within it. It is not enough to have prophets flailing about with their eager surgery. It also takes healers who seek to bridge gaps and promote unity.

Barnabas was called the Son of Exhortation and Consolation because he was always reaching out to his diverse groups of friends and seeking to promote harmony and fellowship among them.

I was led to have us meditate on Barnabas today because the Church of the Brethren has just lost a man

who could very well be called Charles Barnabas Bonsack. For if ever we have been favored with a Son of Consolation it has been in him. His death last Thursday leaves our church bereft of one of her choice spirits.

.

Brother Bonsack has been a bridge between the more and the less educated members of our church. With the coming of colleges into the church there arose strain between those more and those less privileged or successful in achieving education. Pride arises among the educated on their achievements and they despise the others. Pride arises among the uneducated and they point at the self-made men who achieve success without a college degree. So the battle has gone in ding-dong fashion on frequent occasions. But Brother Bonsack has helped all along the way to mollify this problem—a Son of Consolation.

He earned no regular college degree. . . . He reacted against pretense. When they started calling everyone doctor at a summer camp he protested. Then when Brother Yoder announced the next service, he said that they should all come back to hear Charlie.

But he respected education and was a constant reader of books. He did much to promote education in the church.

Perhaps the area where he has served best as a Son of Consolation is in connection with the strains between so-called modernists and so-called fundamentalists within the church. Back in the early twenties when these were yet unfamiliar terms a heated controversy arose over the

Interchurch World Movement. Two brethren were on the verge of heated debate when Brother Charles Barnabas Bonsack put his arms around both of them and said, "Brethren, I wouldn't talk like that."

Since that both in the mission program and in his last decade of evangelistic work he did much to interpret each side or point of view to the other. And by his goodness, grace, sympathy, and persuasive exhortation he has often put his big arms around both parties and said in effect, "Brethren, I wouldn't talk like that."

He being dead yet speaketh. He says to us, "Don't suspect your brother. That leads to fear and to hatred. Believe in your brother in loyalty and trust. That leads to love and unity. Don't drive rifts in the church when differences arise. Build bridges of understanding and confidence over which fellowship can flow again."

I pay tribute today to a very dear friend and brother, Brother Charles Barnabas Bonsack, Son of Consolation.



Although we would gladly have had him tarry longer among us, Charles D. Bonsack has been transferred to larger spheres of influence and service. It has been our good fortune that he was with us as long as he was. In no better way can we show our appreciation of all that he has meant to us than by giving, as he did, the utmost devotion to the work of the Kingdom of God, for the glory of God and the uplift of our fellow men.

Explanatory Guide to the Drawings

Frontispiece: Charles D. Bonsack.

Page 11: The Meadow Branch schoolhouse, near Westminster, Maryland, in which Charles Bonsack received his common-school education.

Page 18: Charles D. and Ida A. Bonsack at the time of their marriage.

Page 27: The Meadow Branch Church of the Brethren, near Westminster, Maryland.

Page 33: Members of the General Mission Board, 1918. Left to right: Otho Winger, D. L. Miller, H. C. Early, Charles D. Bonsack, A. P. Blough, J. J. Yoder, J. H. B. Williams.

Page 38: Members of the General Mission Board and the board's staff, 1940. Around the table, left to right: Clyde Culp (treasurer), Maurice S. Frantz, Nora Rhodes, Rufus D. Bowman, Otho Winger, H. H. Nye, Frank Carper, Newton Long, Anetta Mow (mission education secretary), H. Spenser Minnich (financial secretary), Charles D. Bonsack (executive secretary).

Page 49: On a visit to the mission field in Nigeria, 1928. On horseback, left to right: Albert D. Helser, Charles D. Bonsack, J. B. Emmert.

Page 68: Charles D. Bonsack and Vernon F. Schwalm consecrating a missionary at an Annual Conference missionary convocation.

Page 89: Pastor W. Glenn McFadden of the Elgin congregation presenting to Brother Bonsack a packet of letters of greeting from friends around the world on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Brother Bonsack's ministry, March 16, 1952.

Page 94: Two great commoners, Charles D. Bonsack and Edward Frantz (editor of the *Gospel Messenger*) securing some exercise in a practical way.

